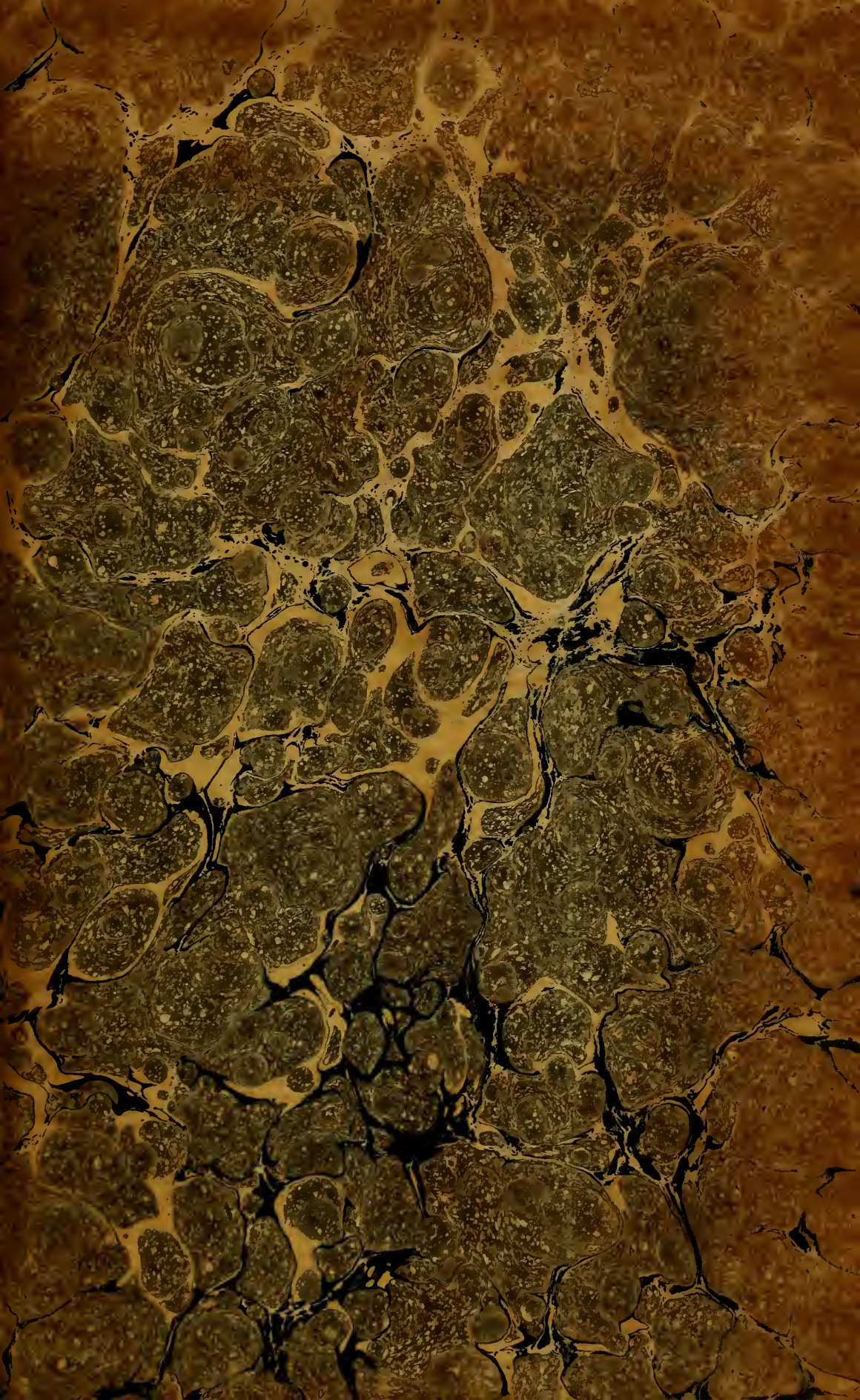

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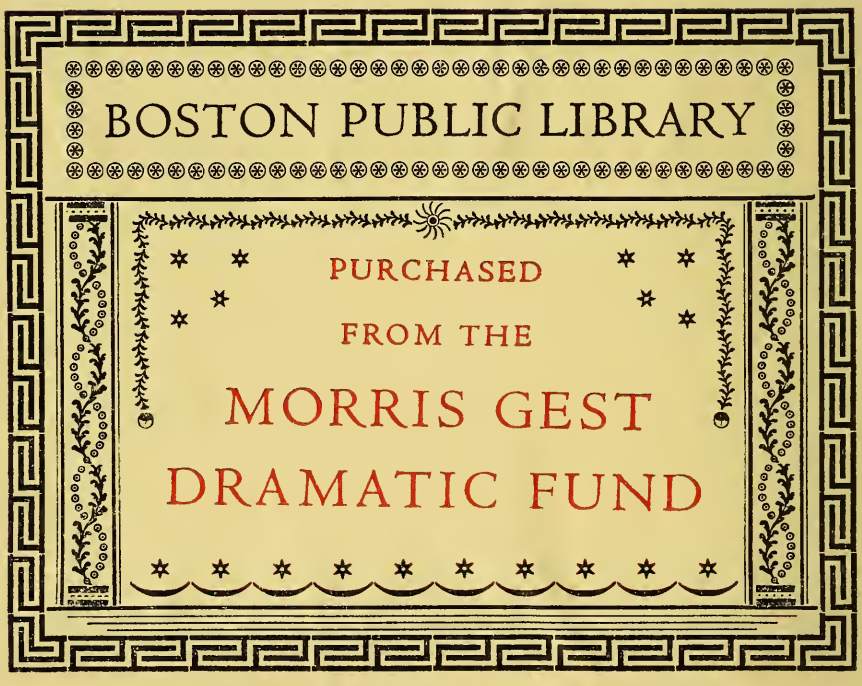

E Rowley Jan 1765

MEROPE:

A

TRAGEDY.

Acted at the

THEATRE-ROYAL

In *DRURY-LANE*,

By His MAJESTY's Servants.

By *AARON HILL*, Esq;

LONDON:

Printed for A. MILLAR, opposite *Katharine-Street*, in the *Strand*. MDCCXLIX.

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1749

DEDICATION.

COver'd, in Fortune's *Shade*, I reſt reclin'd;
My Griefs, All, ſilent: and my Joys reſign'd:
With patient Eye, Life's *evening Gleam*, ſurvey:
Nor *ſhake* th' out-haſt'ning Sands; nor bid 'em *ſtay*.
Yet, while *from Life*, my ſetting Proſpects fly,
Fain wou'd my *Mind's* weak Offſpring *ſhun to die*:
Fain wou'd *their* Hope ſome *Light through Time*, explore;
The *Name's* kind Paſsport—when the *Man's* no more.

Such, *let* 'em *find!*----yet, waſte no Search, *in vain!*
All undiſturb'd, let *buſy Dullneſs* reign!
Spare *Power's* deaf Ear: from *Flatt'ry's* Lure ſtart wide;
Nor ſwell the tow'ry Domes, of *air-built Pride*.
But, near ſome ſilent Seat, where *Wiſdom* dwells,
Hail *Taſte* and *Candor*, in their penſive Cells.
There ſits, high-ſhown, o'er *Fogs* that *low're between*,
Wit's guardian LORD, in his ſequeſter'd Scene.
There, the *gain'd Soul's* MONOPOLIZER, find:----
Th' immenſe Embracer, of *contain'd Mankind!*
Him, whome no Verſe o'erpaints, no Thoughts o'er-rate;
By the *Heart's* RANK, and *Nature's Charter*, GREAT!
Him, whome no *Titles*, *loſt*, cou'd leave *leſs rais'd*:
Nor Thrones imperial cou'd have held, *more prais'd*.
Whom Each known Right, by each beſt Claim acquir'd,
With Every Charm, for every Heart, inſpir'd.
THERE, *hail th' immortal Beam*-----and *end* the Care.
Feel Every Force, from every VIRTUE, *there*.
Find Every GRACE, that ſmiles 'twixt Pole and Pole;
And *All* the MUSES, *met*----in ST. JOHN'S SOUL.

April, 1749.

A. HILL.

ADVERTISEMENT to the READER.

IF there can be a *Pride*, that ranks with *Virtues*, it is That, we feel from Friendſhips with the *Worthy*.—Mr. MALLET, therefore, muſt forgive me, that I boaſt the Honour, He has done my *Meropé*.——I have ſo long been a Retreater from the World, that one of the *beſt Spirits* in it told me, lately, I had made myſelf an ALIEN, there. I muſt confeſs, I owe ſo many Obligations to its Ornaments, of moſt diſtinguiſhed Genius, that I muſt have look'd upon it as a great *Unhappineſs*, to have made Choice of *Solitude*, cou'd I have judg'd Society, in general, by a Reſpect *ſo due* to *Theſe Adorners* of it.

Had I been *born* the ALIEN my Friend *call'd* me, the Regard wherewith our generous Nation has receiv'd this Tragedy, might look but as a natural Effect of its *Humanity to* FOREIGNERS.

Among Theſe, the *French*, above all People in the World, experience our, too kind, Partiality——in Favour even of their *Defects*, and *Levities*. And, yet, their boaſted *Politeſſe* wants Gratitude to pay us back a *like Civility*, where due to our *beſt* Qualities.

For, *France*, unſatisfied with her Ambition toward Monopoly in *Empire*, would extend it to Supremacy in *Wit* and *Learning*. And, particularly, ſome of Mr. *Voltaire*'s Pieces are ſo ſwell'd with this preſumptuous Puffineſs, that I am forc'd into *Abatements*, of the Diſpoſition I once felt, to look upon him as a generous Thinker. So much over-active *Senſibility*, to his own Country's Claims: With ſo unfeeling a *Stupidity*, in judging the Pretenſions of his Neighbours, might *abſolve* all Indignation, ſhort of groſs Indecency; toward one who has not ſcrupled (in the Preface to *His* MEROPE') to repreſent the *Engliſh* as *incapable of Tragedy*; nay, even of *Painting*, or of *Muſick*. We are Men, he ſays, who puſh to their Extremes, upon our Theatres, *Barbarity*, *Abſurdity*, and *abſolute Indecency*.—Men, born in a too barren Climate, to produce a *Taſte*, for the *Fine Arts*: and who muſt *rank beneath* All other People, in the Points of *Genius*, and of *Literature*!

To ſuch *provoking* Stimulations, I have ow'd Inducement, to *retouch*, for Mr. *Voltaire*'s Uſe, the Characters in his high-boaſted *Meropé*: and I have done it on a Plan as near his own, as I could *wring* it, with ſafe Conſcience: that is to ſay, without Diſtaſte to *Engliſh* Audiences.

diences. For he muſt pardon me, if I am ſenſible, that our *unpoliſh'd London Stage*, (as he aſſumes the Liberty of calling it) has entertained a *nobler* Taſte of dignify'd *Simplicity*, than to deprive dramatic Poetry of All that animates its Paſſions; in Purſuit of a *cold*, *ſtarv'd*, *tame*, *Abſtinence*; which, from an Affectation to ſhun *Figure*, ſinks to *Flatneſs*: an *elaborate Eſcape* from *Energy*, into a groveling, wearisome, bald, barren, un-alarming, *Chillneſs* of Expreſſion, that *emaſculates* the Mind, inſtead of *moving* it.

I would not have it charg'd upon his being a *Frenchman*, that I uſe a kind of *hoſtile* Style, in ſpeaking of this Gentleman. He has been pleas'd to do me, in ſome Prefaces of his, a great deal of particular Honour,——and it has been more than once, and upon different Occaſions, I have given *him* Proofs, of a *Partiality*, that will exempt me from ſo poor a Cenſure.——Our *Inſulaires* (as he contemptuouſly calls us) are not us'd to think ſo *narrowly*, as to extend the temporary Animoſity of Nations *oppoſitely intereſted*, to the Spirits of their *Writers* upon *literary* Subjects. —Arts and Sciences are of *no Country*. They conjoin the Natives of all Corners of the Earth, as Fellow-Citizens of *one Republic*.—But, what *imports* this Truth, toward privileging ſuch an Arrogance, as diſ-incorporates *itſelf*, by unbenevolent and *ſeparatory* Partialities.

I have Room to ſay no more, in a ſhort Preface; but will undertake, in a more proper place, to make it evident, to Mr. *Voltaire*'s Satisfaction, and to That of the *French Author* of a Piece which they have lately publiſh'd, in a like vain Preference of *their Players* too, as well as *Poets*, (call'd Le Comedien) that we have had much *finer Writers*, now have; and ſhall, always, have 'em; and that we have *better Actors*, too, and *Actreſſes*, than Thoſe of *Paris*. I ſhall ſhortly hope to leave This Matter indiſputable even to a *French* Judge: in a *Compariſon between the* English *and* French *Theatres*. —It wou'd have pleas'd me more, if *Abler* Hands than mine had ſeem'd diſpos'd to do their Country *fuller Juſtice*. There are many, in it, ſo much better qualify'd, *for* doing it, that I impute its not being done, already, to no other Motive, than *Contempt*, of thoſe vain Writers Confidence.

The Univerſally acknowledged, and *felt*, Skill, of a *Eumenes*, and a *Meropé*, ſuch as no Stage ever ſaw excell'd, (not to name *Others*, who deſerv'd Applauſe, and met with it, to a Degree excitingly uncommon) leaves it quite unneceſſary to add any Thing upon That Subject, *here*: there ſeeming to have been a generous Struggle, whether the Town's ready Diſpoſition to encourage Excellence in Acting, or the *Actor*'s to reward That Diſpoſition, by Increaſe of Power in pleaſing, ſhould be moſt agreeably remarkable.

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. GARRICK.

TOUCH'D be your generous Hearts, to ſpare this Play!
Where Mirth *wou'd laugh* Humanity *away.*
Two thouſand Years our Tale has ſhook the Stage,
And mov'd the Hearts of Greece, *from Age to Age:*
Ev'n ALEXANDER *wept our Queen's Deſpair,*
And, Conqu'ror of a World, ſat conquer'd, *there.*
Bid your brave Hearts explode *th' unſinew'd Scene,*
Where Toys *inſult a People,* born, *to* mean.
From your warm'd Stage, demand th' impaſſion'd Glow,
That draws Delight *from* Death; *and* Uſe, *from* Woe:
Lifts, *by Depreſſion:* trys *the tortur'd Mind,*
In Grief's fierce Fires; *and brings her out,* refin'd.
Unbow'd *by Wrongs, bids Virtue* bear *Diſtreſs:*
And riſe *ſtill* ſteadier, *as new Loads oppreſs.*
Ladies! *ſtand firm, to Paſſion's tendereſt Claim:*
Sighs *are* Love's breezy Powers, *and fan his Flame.*
Laughing Gallants *may promiſe* merry *Lives:*
But, laughing Huſbands *make you* weeping Wives.
They, whoſe own Hearts can feel, will treat yours *beſt:*
And He give *Pain, who thinks it but a* Jeſt.
Nobly weep out,—nor let Shame's *erring Bluſh*
Hold back *the ſtruggling* Tear, *that longs to guſh.*
And you *, *gay Sparklers, of an Hour too* ſhort!
Ye Foes to Thinking! *and ye Friends to* Sport!
Make it no Joke, *when penſively diſtreſt,*
Sighs, *in yon Circle, ſwell the beauteous Breaſt.*
Force, to the fineſt Face, ſuch Sorrow lends:
Pity, and Innocence, *are boſom Friends.*
No Smile, *but* Love's, *ſhou'd meet the* tear-touch'd Eye,
Where, lodg'd on Beauty, Virtue's Dew-drops *lie.*
But, when deep Anguiſh ſhakes a feeling Mind,
How muſt it ake,—*for* Laughers heard behind!
Why ſhou'd Men dream, that only Mirth *can pleaſe?*
No jokeful Wag e're laugh'd off *Life's Diſeaſe.*
Sick'ning to Sadneſs, ſoon or late comes Care;
And He, who flys from Thought, *will meet* Deſpair.
'Tis the pale Coward s Curſe, *to ſtart in vain;*
And think, poſtponing *is* eſcaping *Pain.*
Courage, that weighs *Misfortune, finds it* light;
And, half-admitting, *you* diſarm *it* quite.
Oh, ſave ſtrong Sentiments; *approve their Flame;*
And aid, with generous Hand, *the* Muſe's *Claim.*

* To the Beaus.

EPI-

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. PRITCHARD.

I'M glad with all my Heart, I've ſcap'd *my Wedding*——
Glad! *cry the Maids?—Heaven keep* ſuch *Joy from* ſpreading!
Marriage, (poor Things!) don't move their *Heart ſo* coldly.
'Tis a dark Leap, *they own*——*but, Love* jumps boldly.—
Fair fall th' Advent'rers! I'm no Husband-hater.—
Only, be warn'd by Me, *and* wed no TRAITOR.
Pain-hunting Murm'rer! *born, to* growl, *and* grumble!
No King *can pleaſe him,*—*and no* Wife *can* humble!
Sick to the Soul, *be* HEAVEN *his kind Phyſician!*
Earth's *ableſt Drugs are* loſt; *upon* Ambition.
All Warwick-lane *falls ſhort:*—*and, to* my *Knowledge,*
No Cure is hop'd for, in our Female College.
So, e'en deſpair, Sirs!——*for,* (*be* plainly told *it*)
When we *give out,* YOU'VE poor *Pretence, to* hold *it.*

Vainly, the Stage *makes* War *on this wild Paſſion!*
'Twill reign,——*when Hoops, and Cards are* out *of* Faſhion.
Stubborn, as Woman's Will, *It ſcorns Reſtriction,*
And grows but ten times worſe, *for Contradiction.*

Shun plotting Heads, *dear Ladies!*——*All* miſcarries,
When One, who hums *and* haws *at* Midnight, MARRIES.
Better, plain, downright DUNCE——*No* Dream, *purſuing:*
One, that means bluntly——*and* knows, *what he's doing!*
Not *Him, whoſe factious Mind,* outſoaring *Pleaſure,*
Holds him ſtill buſieſt,——*when his* Wife's *at* Leiſure.

Better, a Sportſman, *ſound of Wind, and hearty.*——
Better, Sir Sot,——*than Spouſe* dry *drunk, with Party!*
A hunting *Husband* hallows——*and you* HEAR *him.*—
A drunken *Deary* ſtag--gers——*and you* STEER *him.*—
Each,—conſcious *of his* Wife, *takes Care, to make her,*
One Way or other——*an indulg'd* Partaker.

But, your ſage, ſaturnine, ambitious *Lover,*
Keeps *no* one Secret, *Woman* wou'd diſcover.
No.——*He's a deep, dark, penſive,* Comfort-hater:
As very a Poliphontes†——*as* my *Traitor!*
Stranger at home, he ſtrolls abroad, *for Bleſſing:*
And holds whate'er *he* HAS *not* worth *poſſeſſing.*
Freedom, and Mirth, and Health, and Joy,—deſpiſes!
And ſcorns All REST——*he, ſo pro-found-ly* WISE *is!*

At length, thank Heaven! he DIES: *kind* Vapours *ſtrike him:*
And leaves behind,—*ten thouſand Madmen,* like *him.*

† *A King who slew his brother for his wife's Addresses* ——

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

POLIPHONTES, *General of* Mycené.	Mr. HAVARD.
MEROPE', *Widow of the late King.*	Mrs. PRITCHARD.
EUMENES, *her Son.*	Mr. GARRICK.
EURICLES, *a Lord, of* Meropé's *Party.*	Mr. LEE.
NARBAS, *Foster Father to* Eumenes.	Mr. BERRY.
EROX, *Favourite of* Poliphontes.	Mr. BRIDGES.
ISMENE', *Daughter of* Narbas.	Mrs. GREEN.
Chief Priest, and other Priests.	Mr. BEARD, &c.

Ladies, Officers, Guards, &c.

MEROPE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Palace.

MEROPE', *mournful, on a Couch.*

ISMENE', *leaning melancholy, below.*

Soft Muſick.

Enter, to ISMENE', *a Singer.*

ISMENE'

SEE! where the lone majeſtic Mourner weeps;
Loſt, even to *Muſick*'s Power!——try: ſtrain each Note,
In Melody's wide Compaſs.——Happily,
Some Change, through *ſad*, to *lively*, may have Force,
To ſtrike recov'ring Senſe, and wake Regard.
——Firſt, in low Sympathy of *Sorrow's Softneſs*,
Sooth her dejected Soul—then, ſtart at once
To *Swells* of *Joy*—and ſtorm Attention's Ear.

Song: by the ſame Voice, interchangeably, to Flute and Trumpet: which are heard as at ſome Diſtance without.

Flute.

Stay, ſtay, *Deſpair!*—begone vain *Hope!* *go.*
Sorrow can hear no Voice, but That of *Woe.*

Trumpet.

Trumpet.

Away with your *Tears* where Enjoyment ſhou'd flow.
Bid Defiance to *Pain.*—let her go: let her go.
Do the Gods love *Complainers?*—No. No. No.

Flute.

Ah!—tis in *vain* to ſtrive—farewell *believing.*
Death is the ſure ſhort *Road*—to ſhun *deceiving.*

Trumpet.

Laugh at your Woes: and make 'em *pleaſing.*

Flute.

No, no—the Pains we chuſe deſpiſe all *Eaſing.*

Trumpet.

Hope for a *Cure* where Nature plac'd it.
Life is ſo ſhort, 'tis a Shame to waſte it.
Seek for Delight: and *deſerve* to taſte it.
Age will come on, and allow no Leaſure.
Youth will be gone, and away goes Pleaſure.

Flute.

Reſt and the Grave will meet.—but ah!—*till then,*
Joy *flys* the vain Purſuit of *hopeleſs Men.*

Merope *riſes, and comes forward.*

ISMENE'.

Go—the Queen riſes.——Angels, that have tun'd,
Reward the vocal Magic of thy Song.

Exit Singer.

MEROPE'.

Let me, when, *next*, thy too officious Love,
Faithful *Iſmené*, trys th' harmonious Charm,
Let me, have Muſick, *ſolemn*, all, and *ſlow*,
Sad-ſuited to my Thoughts——Why ſhou'd I hear,
Who have no Power to *taſte*, ſuch *ſpritely* Notes,
As they who are more Happy, find more Sweet?

ISMENE'.

Why, when the *Gods* grow gentle, are *You* ſad?
You felt their *Anger*, ſharply.—Now they ſmile,
Embrace their proffer'd Bounty—All the Lords
Of glad *Mycené*, in full Senate met,
Take Meaſures to proclaim you *reigning* Queen:

You,

You, whom distress but brightens!—to whose Charms,
Made aweful by your Grief, Woes add new Majesty!

MEROPE.

What, no News yet, of *Narbas*? or my *Son*?

ISMENE.

May it be soon!—No Prince, of Birth like His,
Where-e're conceal'd, can 'scape such Search, unknown.

MEROPE.

Will ye, at length, ye Powers, reward my Tears?
Will ye, at last, restore *Eumenes*, to me?
—If he yet lives—this only remnant Heir
Of his wrong'd Mother's Miseries!—oh, *save* him.
From his dear Breast, strike wide the Murd'rer's Dagger.
Is he not *Your's*? a Branch, from Great *Alcides*?
What, tho'— forget it, and be *hush'd*, O Faith!)
What, tho' to Traitors prosp'rous Swords, you gave
His *Father*'s fated Life—ah, yet! desert not
This Image of his Form, that fills my Soul.

ISMENE.

Dear, tho' he doubtless was, and justly mourn'd,
Shou'd you *exclude* all sense of Bliss, beside?

MEROPE.

I am a *Mother*:—with a Mother's *Fears*.

ISMENE.

But, can a Mother's Fears efface the Stamp
Of *Hero*'s Soul, that marks a Race like yours?
—Sweet, tho' his infant Smiles, they dwell, too fix'd,
Too deep, on your touch'd Memory!—Long Years
Are past, since first you lost him.

MEROPE.

Lost him?—*never*.—
In twice seven dreadful years, no Moment's Light
Broke on my Eyes, but brought *His Image* with it.
Why tell'st thou me of *Time*? —Days, Months, and Years,
Have grown; but with 'em grew, my Pain, to lose him.
—Weigh that last fatal Hint, thy Father sent me.

Hope, ſaid th' Alarmer ſoon, *to ſee Eumenes*
All, you wou'd wiſh:—*fear* All, from *Poliphontes*.

ISMENE'.

Wiſely, you fear him.—but 'twere wiſer, ſtill,
So fearing, to *prevent* him.—Hear the *States*:
Quit, at their Prayer, this *Regent*'s Name—be *crown'd*:
And riſe, *indeed* the *Queen* they meant to make you.

MEROPE'.

Is not the Crown my *Son's*?

ISMENE'.

A Son, ſo lov'd—
Shou'd he return, wou'd thank—

MEROPE'.

Periſh the Heart,
That, meanly proud, and poorly fill'd for *Self*,
Swells, from Another's *Loſſes*!

ISMENE'.

Public Intereſt——

MEROPE'.

Curſe on *all* Int'reſt, that includes not *Honeſty*!
—But, here, even Int'reſt brings no Plea to tempt me.
What can a *childleſs* Mother hope, from Empire?
What has Diſtreſs to do, with Pomp's vain Splendor?
—I ſee the very Light of Heaven, with *Pain*.
Ne're ſhall brief Comfort chear theſe blaſted Eyes,
That ſaw my bleeding Lord, my murder'd Children;
Saw my Friends fall: Saw *Men* and *Gods* forſake me.
—O, Guilt! O, Perfidy!—oh! Death's dire Day!
Preſent, forever, to my frighted Soul.

ISMENE'.

Oft have I wept,—to hear that Day's ſad Tale.

MEROPE'.

I hear it *now*!—Even yet their Cries riſe round me!
Save, ſave, the *King*—ſave the poor gaſping *Princes*:
Save the diſtracted *Queen*!—I ſcream—I fly—
On every Side I turn meet battling Crowds:
Swords, glitt'ring Spears, loud Shouts, and mingled Groanings.

Meet,

Meet, *laſt*—a Sight—beyond all Senſe of Horror!
Meet—an expiring Huſband's out-ſtretch'd Eye,
Strain'd, with a death-mix'd Tenderneſs on mine——
And ſtruggling from his Blood, to reach, and claſp me.
—There, two departing infant Suff'rers *fell*,
The Eldeſt, of our Loves!—duteous, in *Death!*
Croſs the King's Breaſt, they threw their little Bodies,
And lent *their* Hand's weak Aid—to ſave their Father.
—*Only Eumenes*—'ſcap'd th' Aſſaſſin's Fury.
Some interpoſing *God* vouchſaf'd to *veil* him:
And He, who ſcreen'd him, then, may, *once*, reſtore him.
—*Narbas*, thy wife, thy faithful Father, bore him
Far from my Sight—to ſome dark ſafe Retreat:
Some *Deſart*,—barren of Diſtreſs, and Man!

SCENE II.

MEROPE'. ISMENE'. EURICLES.

ISMENE'.

Madam!——Lord *Euricles*——

MEROPE'.

Wellcome—what Hope?

EURICLES.

Wou'd, I cou'd anſwer—what you wiſh to hear!

MEROPE'.

Not what I wiſh——but what Heaven wills, reply.

EURICLES.

Vain was our Search——From *Peneus'* Bank, it ſpread,
O'er vaſt *Olympus:* far and wide, through *Greece*,
Enquiry, lab'ring, loſt its fruitleſs Prayer.
Deſcription cou'd not wake the leaſt Idea.
None knew, none ever heard of, *Narbas'* Name!

MEROPE'.

Alas! he breaths no more——my Son is *dead.*

ISMENE'.

So, Fear makes real every fanſied Woe.
—You've heard, that, on Report of this new Peace,
My Father guides him, ſecret, to your Wiſh.

EURI-

EURICLES.

Thence grew his Fear! Good *Narbas*, wiſely loyal,
Veils his Return, and cautiouſly conveys him.
Narbas knows All his Dangers——I, mean while,
Watch, with a guardful Eye theſe Murd'rers Motions:
And, with determin'd Hand, prepare to ſave him.

MEROPE.

On Faith ſo try'd as Thine, even Woe leans, eaſy.

EURICLES.

Doubt but my *Power*'s Defect: My *Will* finds none.
——But I have News more threat'ning.

MEROPE.

Can That be?

EURICLES.

Th' aſſembled Senate vote, in warm Debate,
A Partner in your Crown.——

MEROPE.

Preſumptuous Care!
You ſhou'd have call'd it *Inſult*.

EURICLES.

Words were vain.
Truth, unſuſtain'd by Power, but fights, to *fall*.
The partial *People* roar for *Poliphontes*:
And Right, and Law, and Pity, ſink before him.

MEROPE.

Can Fortune, then, reduce the Great to *Pity!*
Can Kings, in their own Realms, contract to *Slaves?*
He, who counts *Jove*, among his crown'd Progenitors,
Come He, to Subjects, to explore a *Maſter!*
——Shame on thy *Lies*, O Loyalty!

EURICLES.

Your Friends——

MEROPE.

I have *no* Friends——Yes—Thee; good *Euricles!*
Forgive me, that I wrong'd thee——'twas my *Sorrow*.
The *Wretched*, in their Pain, forget the *Kind*.
—Blocks! Stones!—Rebellion hardens Men, to Brutes!
Senſeleſs, alike, to Gratitude, and Glory,
Even *Names*, as well as Natures, change their Meaning.

EURI-

EURICLES.

Dear, to their Hearts, they hold their Sov'reign's Name;
And weep his honour'd Mem'ry.——For *Yourself*,
Their Love outgoes Deſcription.——They but fear.
Your Sexe's widow'd Weakneſs *inſecure*;
And *Poliphontes'* *Sword*, they think, will guard it.

MEROPE'.

Ever inſulted, now by Friends, now Forms.
Princes are *Slaves*, that Subjects may have *Liberty*.
Driven, or attracted, ever!——why was a King
Call'd *Ruler?* infamous Abuſe of Phraſe!
Faction and Clamour are, *more*, Kings than He.

EURICLES.

Something muſt be reſolv'd, to check their Speed.

MEROPE'.

Yes——let me *face* theſe Lords, of Kings, and Law:
Comets of Empire! theſe portent'cus Stars,
That ſparkle by the Fire they *ſteal* from Majeſty!
I will go dart Truth's Light'ning in their Eyes,
And thunder in their Ears the Rights of Thrones.
I will revive loſt Senſe of Truſt, and Duty:
I will aſſert their Sov'reign's near Return.

(*going.*)

EURICLES.

Oh, Heav'n! be wary——That Way, Ruin lies.
Their Tyrant Leader ſtarts, already fir'd,
By that Alarm: and dreams, of what he dreads.

MEROPE'.

What *can* he, more——ſo much already done?

EURICLES.

Jealous of Danger, Men make Haſte in Guilt:
Work, to be ſafe, and hold no Means too wicked.
Mycené, but by Faction, freed from Faction,
Weigh'd like a Conqueſt, he computes His *own*.
No Tye ſo ſacred binds endanger'd Valour,
Where hot Ambition ſpurs it——Every Rampart
Gives Way, before him. *Law*, corrupted, guards him.
Wealth dreſſes, *Poverty* attends, *Pride* leads:
And *Prieſthood* preſſes Gods who *hate*——to *ſerve* him.

MERO-

MEROPE.

I see th' Abyss, before me——Let it be.
If I plunge in, and crush this *Poliphontes*,
'Twill be, to fall for Vengeance.

EURICLES.

Soft!——he *comes*.
Exeunt Euricles and Ismené.

MEROPE.

Wear for a Moment, Heart! the Veil thou hat'st.

SCENE III.

MEROPE. POLIPHONTES.

POLIPHONTES.

Ever in *Tears*, my Queen!——now, give a Truce
To Sighs; and cast aside your needless Sorrow.
Shake, from those injur'd Eyes, a Grief that dims'em:
And to the Voice of *Love*, vouchsafe your Ear.
——*Mycene's Chiefs* have task'd my willing Sword
To *guard*, and (wou'd you smile) *partake*, your Throne.

MEROPE.

Unblushing Faction, What *bold* Brows are Thine!

POLIPHONTES.

Faction, uprooted now, survives no more.
One sole *Division* rests:——'twixt *You*, and *Me*.
Last, let *us*, too, unite——Peace, Reason, Safety,
Confed'rate Strength, joint Int'rest, All, concur;
To recommend, and firm, this courted Knot
——You frown——

MEROPE.

I do, indeed: and gaze, with Horror!

POLIPHONTES.

Gaze on.—I am no Stranger to *myself*:
Nor to a Woman's *Passions*.—I grew grey
Beneath a Weight, of Winters spent in Arms.
——I know, Time's Furrows are no Paths to Love.
I know too, *You* are younger:——still, retain
Charms,

Charms, paſt their ſickly Bloom, and ripe as Summer.
I know it, All.—But, Wiſdom knows it *not*.
Intereſt of State o'er-leaps nice Taſtes in Love.
—Weigh not my Offer in Diſdain's light Balance.
You are the Daughter, Mother, Wife, of *Kings*:
But the State wants a *Maſter*.—What avails
Vain Title, till ſome Sword, like mine, ſupports it.

MEROPE.

Heaven, that o'ercharg'd my Heart with Loads of Woe,
For this new Inſult, left it unprepar'd.
Bold *Subject*, of a King who call'd *me* Wife!
Dar'ſt thou defame the Mem'ry of thy *Lord*,
With ſuch audacious Hope?—Aſpire, to *me!*
Me, to ſupplant my *Child!* my Heart's whole Care:
Stain his diſhonour'd Throne, with Guilt and Thee!
Me, canſt thou dream ſo baſe, to wed Thy Lowneſs:
And crown with Empire's Wreath a Soldier's Brow?

POLIPHONTES.

Soldier? immortal Gods!—*Who* more deſerves
To *govern*, States, than He who, beſt, can *ſave?*
—With how perverſe an Aptitude, Diſdain
Forgets, its own Foundation!—*teach* it, Madam!
That All that ſwells *your Pride*, ſupports *my Honour*.
He who was, firſt, call'd *King*, e're That, was *Soldier*.
Great, becauſe brave; and ſcepter'd, by his *Sword*.
—Birth is a Shadow. Courage, ſelf-ſuſtain'd,
Out-lord's Succeſſion's Phlegm—and needs *no* Anceſtors.
I am *above Deſcent*; and prize no *Blood*.
Scarce is my own left mine; 'tis loſt, for Glory:
Spilt, in my Country's Cauſe: in *Yours*, fair Scorner!
—Let what ſtill warms my Heart flow, *laſt*, for *You*.
Nay, why *averted?*—Spite of your Contempt,
My Worth weighs *heavieſt*, put *but Rank* in Balance.
Take Safety—'tis *my* Gift. Fill half *my* Throne;
My Party calls *All* mine: Love *ſhares* it yours.

MEROPE.

Party? Thou fell Provoker, of Reproach!
Party ſhould tremble, where a *Monarch* rules?

POLIPHONTES.

There will be Parties; and there *muſt* be Kings:
And he, who beſt can *curb*, was form'd to reign.

MEROPE.

Bluſh, if thou can'ſt, thou Foe to Truth, and Fame,
To thy King's Aſhes, to his Widow's Tears;
To his loſt Son's hard, hopeleſs, friendleſs, Fate:
And his high kindred Gods, who gave him Empire.

POLIPHONTES.

'Tis doubtful, whether, yet, this Son *ſurvives*.
But, come he, if he *can*, from Death's dumb Shade,
And, back'd by kindred Gods, reclaim his Throne.
—I ſeek not to *deceive* you.—Stern *Mycené*
Brooks no ſuch feeble Maſter. Warlike States
Lean, but on time-try'd Columns, Kings, whoſe Claim
Springs from their *Souls*—and who *defend*, and reign.
—I, who *reveng'd* your Lord, by Right ſucceed him.

MEROPE.

Succeed him, Traitor?—Has he not a *Son?*

POLIPHONTES.

Boy-brain'd *Eumenes* is too young, for Power—
Be Pride his Birth-right—I'm content with Empire.
—Why ſhould he, acting nothing, aſk for All?

MEROPE.

Gods were his Great Forefathers,—*thence*, his Claim.

POLIPHONTES.

Far other Value, bears *Mycené*'s *Crown*.
Right, to rule *Men*, is now no longer held
By dull Deſcent, like *Land's* low Heritage:
'Tis the pluck'd Fruit of Toil—'tis the paid Price
Of Blood, loſt nobly: And 'tis, thence, *my* Due.

MEROPE.

What haſt thou done, thou Wretch! to dare ſuch Hope?

POLIPHONTES.

Bethink you, of that Day, when theſe proud Walls
Bluſh'd with the Blood you boaſt, from Traitor's Swords.
Review your helpleſs *Huſband*—ſee your *Sons*,
Expiring, round you.—Wipe thoſe guſhing Eyes—

And

And view me, what I *was:* Not, then, too *low*
To ſhare your ruffled *Paſſions.*—Yes: 'Twas I,
From your freed Palace chas'd th' o'erwhelming Foe:
Sav'd your *Herculean* Sceptre, and its Queen.
—I, I, *repell'd,*—the Woes you could but *weep.*
See *there,* my Right, my Rank, my Claim to *Love.*

MEROPE.

Hear, hear him, Heaven! and give me back my Son.

POLIPHONTES.

Yes: Let him come, this *Son!*—He ſhall be taught
Leſſons of Glory: Taught *my* Arts to reign.
—*Joy* to the Blood of *Hercules!*—I, too,
Revere: Let others dread it. *My* Ambition
Climbs, *beyond* Progeny—not to deſcend
From Heaven, *my* Wiſh. Could I aſpire, to be,
Myſelf, a God, 'twere well.—To ſpring *from* Gods,
Is leſs, than mine—who, *like* a God, *command.*

MEROPE.

Think—e're thou claim'ſt a Greatneſs, *not* thy own—
If thou would'ſt emulate a God, be *juſt:*
Man can be *brave,* too boldly.—*Hercules*
Sav'd many a King.—But, did he *ſteal* their *Diadems?*
—Woud'ſt thou reſemble *Hercules?*—Protect
Unfriended Innocence. Aſſert thy Prince.
Reſtore th' unhappy Wand'rer to my Arms;
Ceaſe to afflict; and *give* him, to my Fondneſs.
—*So,* cou'd thy Influence move, *ſo* try'd, *ſo* courted,
Who knows—for, Gratitude has Power, *like* Love—
Who knows—how far I *might* forget my Glory—
And—if Peace dwells ſo low—*Expect* it *not*—
I will not bid you hope—that I *can ſtoop.*
So greatly far.—*Bend,* I am ſure, I *cannot.*

[*Exit.* Meropé.

SCENE IV.

POLIPHONTES, EROX.

EROX.

Ent'ring, I heard her too preſumptuous Scorn,
And wonder'd, at your Patience! Waits a King,
For a weak Woman's *Wiſh*, to fix his Throne?
Greatly and bravely have you clear'd your Way
To the Hill's Foot: Yet, when it courts your climbing,
Fall back, to *ſigh*; and ſeek *her* Hand, to lead you!

POLIPHONTES.

Near, as thou think'ſt I ſtand, my warier Eye
Marks, 'twixt the Throne and me, a *Precipice*,
Where Faith or I fall headlong.—Does not *Meropé*
Know, her *Eumenes near?*—Shou'd he return,
Th' inconſtant People wou'd with Shouts receive him,
And ſmooth his way to Empire, o'er *my* Boſom.
—This ſhou'd I *ſuffer*—all in vain my Sword
Succeeded, when *his Father fell*, *my Victim.*
In vain *bled* both his *Brothers.*—Vainly, too,
Thy Veil, O ſilent Darkneſs! has conceal'd me,
Till I, behind *thee*, have been thought th' *Avenger*
Ev'n of the *Blood I ſpilt.*—At length, impends
Th' important Hour! and Fate is *mine*, or *Meropé's.*
—Dear to *Mycené*, ſhou'd this Son *arrive*,
Where are my fifteen Years long Toils in Blood?
Eumenes muſt not come.—Doom'd, from his Cradle,
To blaſt my thwarted Schemes, *Atonement* claims him.
—Thou know'ſt, from Proofs, moſt timely intercepted,
This new Boy King *returns*, and hopes *Mycené.*
What ſhall we do? Night veils not long (they ſay)
The *Murd'rer's* time-told Secret. Some blind Chance
May whiſper, Truths he muſt not live to *hear.*
—If, as our Prieſts aſſure us, Heaven *loves Vengeance*,
Sure! after fifteen Years, of patient *Stray*,
The leaden-footed Creeper, now, draws *near!*

EROX.

EROX.

Truſt your high Fortune, and diſdain a Doubt.
Foreſight and *Fierceneſs* are the brave Man's Gods,
And his own Hand ſupports him.

POLIPHONTES.

My late Order?

EROX.

'Twas, with a ſilent Firmneſs, well obey'd.
—From *Elis* to *Mycené*, every Road
Is watch'd, by ſleepleſs Warders.—If they come,
Narbas and *He*, their *Gods* muſt march before 'em:
Or not *Alcides'* Blood cou'd ſcape the ſhedding.
Your Soldier's Zeal is warm.

POLIPHONTES.

But is it *blind?*

EROX.

It *is*.—None knows his *Name*, whoſe Life he waits.
All they have yet been told is, a ſad Tale,
Of an *old wily Traitor*, leading with him,
On murd'rous Purpoſe, an *Aſſaſſin Youth*,
Urg'd by exacted Oaths, to ſeek *your* Death.

POLIPHONTES.

But, what this Rumour, of *Miſanthus*, *kill'd*,
Before *Alcides' Temple?*—Is that true?

EROX.

Too ſure, he fell.—I choſe *his* truſty Arm,
Join'd with his martial *Brother's*, as moſt fit,
To guard that likelieſt Station; where, ſhould *Narbas*
Dare, with his Exile, touch *Mycené's Border*,
Firſt, they wou'd reſt, to beg That *Godhead's* Care,
From whom their Race preſumes its proud Deſcent.

POLIPHONTES.

'Twas Forecaſt, worthy of a Zeal, like Thine.
Nor cou'd thy Care have choſen an abler Hand,
Or one more try'd in Blood, than That *Miſanthus*.
—'Twas *He*, thou know'ſt, that, faithful to my Cauſe,
On that black Night, attending, near *Creſphontes*,
Taught the King's Sword, amid the Duſk of Slaughter,

To pierce its *Maſter's* Breaſt.—An Act, ſo daring,
Deſerv'd the Sword, tho' three rich *Gems* adorn'd it,
He *had* it: And he *wore* it, for his Pains.

EROX.

Yet, at *Alcides' Temple*, drew it raſhly,
And *loſt it*, with his *Life*.

POLIPHONTES.

How *ſcap'd* his Brother?

EROX.

Scar'd, out of Mem'ry's Uſe, All he cou'd tell me
Was, that the God inſpir'd ſome *dreadful Form!*
Some more than mortal *Monſter*;—And *He fled*,

POLIPHONTES.

Vile Safety!—left his Brother unreveng'd:
And ſhun'd a Soldier's Death.—We muſt be watchful.
Some in-felt *Bodings* bid me call this Stranger
Eumenes: Or his *Friend*.

EROX.

That Fear was mine:
Till, on Reflexion that he came, *alone*,
It look'd unlikely.—Chance it, as it may,
Whene're he this way comes, he comes, to *die*.

POLIPHONTES.

True.—Yet, I cou'd have wiſh'd to *ſpare this* Crime,
But, one firſt choſen, the Reſt grow neceſſary:
So falls the Son.—The *Mother* muſt not follow.
Her, I have *Need* of. Marriage mends my Reign.
Her rightful Title conſecrates Ambition:
And Uſurpation whitens into *Law*.
—The People love her: I, poſſeſſing *her*,
Hold her Friends too, in *Dowry*.—*Erox!*—thou,
Whoſe Fate grows cloſe to mine, aſſiſt my Scheme.
Skill'd how to ſpread Craft's Nets, allure the People.
Train 'em, by ev'ry Art: poize ev'ry Temper,
Avarice will *ſell* his *Soul*: Buy That, and *mould* it.
Weakneſs will be *deluded*; there, grow *eloquent*.
Is there a tott'ring Faith? Grapple it faſt
By *Flatt'ry*: And profuſely deal *my Favours*.

Threaten

Threaten the Guilty. *Entertain* the Gay.
Frighten the Rich. Find *Wiſhes*, for the Wanton:
And *Reverence*, for the Godly,—Let none 'ſcape thee.
Dive into *Hearts*: Sound every Nature's *Biaſs*—
And bribe Men by their *Paſſions*.—But, Theſe Arts,
Already Thine, why waſte I Time to *teach* thee!
Vainly, the *Sword* ſucceſsful ſcales a Throne;
Since, Fortune *changing*, Strength's loſt Hope is flown.
But *Art*, call'd in, attracts reluctant *Will*:
And, what were loſt by Power, is gain'd by Skill.

End of the Firſt Act.

ACT II. Scene I.

The Palace.

MEROPE. EURICLES. ISMENE.

MEROPE.

IS the World dumb, on my *Eumene*'s Fate?

ISMENE.

Calamity, too ſoon, had found a Tongue.

MEROPE.

Has Nothing, from the Borders, yet been heard?

EURICLES.

Nothing, that claims *your* notice.

MEROPE.

Who is *He*,
This Priſoner, I am told, but now, brought guarded?

EURICLES.

A raſh young Stranger, caught with guilty Hand,
Red, from the recent Marks of ſome late Murder.

MEROPE.

A *Murder!* an *unknown!*—WHOM, has he kill'd?
How? and *where*, was it?—I am fill'd with Horror.

ISMENE.

Oh! Senſe too lively, of maternal Love!
All Things alarm your Tenderneſs. You hear
Chance ſpeak: and take her Voice, for That of Nature.

EURICLES.

This low Adventure, of ſome common Murd'rer,
Some Robber of the Borders, carries with it
No Conſequence, of Quality to move you.
This, but one Crime, of many a thouſand, frequent
On all our Frontiers: the ſad Fruit, of *Wars*,
Domeſtic and licentious; weak'ning Juſtice,
And, fearleſs in the Face of Heaven, oppoſing
Friend againſt Friend, and Brother murd'ring Brother.

MEROPE.

What is his *Name?* whence *came* he?—Why *unknown?*

EURICLES.

He ſeems, and is, if Truth may truſt Appearance,
A Youth of rural Birth,—Some Nymph's *Adonis*
Whoſe Eye wou'd ſooner kill th' unpity'd *Maid*,
Than his unpractis'd *Sword* attempt the *Man*.

MEROPE

Whom (*tell* me) has he *kill'd?*—anſwer.—I'll *ſee* him.

EURICLES.

What ſtrange Emotion, This.—

MEROPE.

No Matter.—bring him.
If I diſcover Guilt, 'tis mine to *puniſh*:
If wrong'd, I owe him *Mercy*.

EURICLES.

——*Should* he have Merit,
'Tis plac'd ſo low, by Fortune.—

MEROPE.

Fortune's Faults,
Where Merit ſuffers, call on Kings, to *mend* 'em.

EU-

EURICLES.

What can a Wretch like This *deſerve*, from Power?

MEROPE.

O, *Euricles!* look *inward:* aſk thy Heart.
Be, for a Moment, but, This Wretch, *Thyſelf*—
And, *then*, acquit the Power, that ſcorn'd to note thee.
—Beſides, who knows? he may—be *ſtill*, prompt Fear.
Perhaps, my troubled Mind ſtarts Hints too lightly.
Hearts that have Everything to fear, ſlight Nothing.
—Let him be brought.—I will, myſelf, examine him.

EURICLES.

Your Will *muſt* be obey'd.

MEROPE.

Go, my *Iſmene!*
Bid thoſe who guard the Pris'ner bring him hither.
Exit Iſmene.

EURICLES.

Be That *my* fitter Taſk—— [*offering to go.*]

MEROPE.

No, *Euricles.*
Stay: and partake more Terrors —Cou'd you think it?
Preſs'd by new Sorrows, I forget my paſt,
And have not yet inform'd you——*Polyphontes*
Has dar'd demand my *Hand*: dar'd—talk of *Marriage.*

EURICLES.

Great, even beyond their *Seemings*, are your Dangers!

MEROPE.

Dangers?— No Danger, ſure! can licenſe *That!*

EURICLES.

Might Freedom be forgiven——

MEROPE.

Be plain.

EURICLES.

Oh! Queen!
I know his Offer *Inſult*: know, It ſtains
Your Name. Yet, bluſhing, *add*,—Your forc'd Con-
Grown infamouſly *neceſſary*,——ſtands, [ſent,
The ſole, ſafe Bar, 'twixt All your Race, and *Ruin.*

ME-

MEROPE.

'Tis Horror, but to *think*, ſo vile a Dream!

EURICLES.

So thinks the *Army*.——So, the *Senate* thinks.
So, think th' exacting *Gods*:——and, ſo—

MEROPE.

The *Gods!*—
Why were *They* nam'd?—Cou'd they forgive ſuch *Fall?*
From their own Offſpring, to a Son of Clay!
A Birth of Tumult! a blown Bubble! rais'd
By Fortune's Breath; and puff'd *above* the World,
To ſhine, a Moment, and go out in Weeping.

EURICLES.

The King, your Son——

MEROPE.

Ah! Name not *Him*.——How, *Euricles!*
How wou'd He thank, my Choice of *ſuch* a Father?

EURICLES.

Princes grow wiſe by Sorrows. He will ſee
That hated Choice the Root of all his Safety.
He will, by That, ſurvive his menac'd Doom:
Owe his ſecur'd Succeſſion, to That Act
Of dire Neceſſity: and thank your Pity.

MEROPE.

What, what, have you been telling me?

EURICLES.

Hard Truths:
Due, from firm Loyalty, to weak Diſtreſs.

MEROPE.

Can *Euricles* then plead, for *Poliphontes!*
You, who have painted him ſo vile, ſo truly,
And never ſtoop'd, yourſelf, from Faith, to Fraud?

EURICLES.

I know him guilty:—but, I know him *raſh:*
Know him *reſiſtleſs:* know him *childleſs*, too;
And know, you love *Eumenes*.

ME-

MEROPE.

Loving *Him*,
How can I chuſe but *hate*, the Hand that wrongs him?
——Leave *Poliphontes* odious: nor, forever,
Dwell thus on Claims of *Policy*;—forgetful,
That Princes are *above* theſe Self-ſecurings:
And born, to live for Truth—or die for Glory.
—Speak to me of my *Son*: Say what you know
Of him.—hide Nothing—for,—

[*Sits and weeps regardleſs of* Eumene's *Entrance.*

EURICLES.

Behold!—the Stranger,
You long'd, a Moment ſince, to ſee, and queſtion.

SCENE. II.

MEROPE. EURICLES. ISMENE. *Guards, with* EUMENES, *in Chains.*

EUMENES.—(*To* Iſmene.)
Is That the *Queen*, ſo fam'd for Miſeries?

ISMENE.

It *is*.

EUMENES.

How ſweetly aweful!—how *adorn'd*, by Sorrows!

ISMENE.

Why doſt thou pauſe? the Queen admits thee nearer.

EUMENES.

No wonder, ſo much Sweetneſs, *ſo diſtreſs'd*,
Mov'd, even ſo greatly diſtant,—as to *me*:
And drew me, from my Deſart!—Give me Leave
To ſtand, a while.—and gaze unmark'd—and *note* her.
——O, ye protecting *Gods!* whate're becomes
Of an abandon'd, nameleſs Thing, like *me*,
Bleſs this *Supreme* Unfortunate! this Face,
That, awefully ſublime, amidſt Diſtreſs,
Glows warm, with weeping Mercy!—Bold Adverſity.
That ſtrikes at Crowns, demands, O Heaven! *Thy* guarding.

IS-

ISMENE.

Madam!—the *Priſoner* waits.

MEROPE.—*Turning, to obſerve him.*

A *Murderer*, This!——

Why ſtands he diſtant thus?--Come forward, Stranger.
—A Mien like this, a Murd'rer's!—*Can* it be,
That Looks, ſo form'd for Truth, ſo mark'd for Innocence,
Cover a cruel Heart?—Come *nearer*, Youth!
Thou art unhappy; bid That Fate *protect* thee:
And ſpeak, as to an Ear that loves the Wretched.
Anſwer me now.—Whoſe was the Blood thou ſhed'ſt?

EUMENES.

Oh, Queen!—Yet—for a Moment—ſpare my Tongue.

MEROPE.

Murder, and *Modeſty!*—Whence, all this Shame?

EUMENES.

Reſpect, Confuſion,—ſomething, *here—un-nam'd*,
And never felt, till *now*,—have bound my Tongue.
But—oh! do Juſtice, to your Power to ſhake me;
And, let not *Heſitation*—paſs—for *Guilt*.

MEROPE.

Go on.--Who was he, whom, I'm told, thou ha'ſt kill'd?

EUMENES.

One, who with Wrongs, and Inſult, fir'd my Raſhneſs.
One, who was Young, like *me*; but, ſure, leſs *honeſt*.

MEROPE.

Young!--was he young?--ſpeak; *tell* me.--No.--be *dumb*.
Ice, at my conſcious Heart, were *warm*—compar'd
With what he chills my Soul with!—Did'ſt thou
know him?

EUMENES.

I did *not*. All *Mycené*'s Earth, and Air,
Her Cities, and her Sons, are new, to *me*.

MEROPE.

What, was he *arm'd*, this young Aſſaulter? came he
With *Malice?* or for *Robbery?* Be of Comfort.
If he attack'd thee, thy Defence was neceſſary,
And ſad Neceſſity makes All things juſt.

EUMENES.

Heaven is my Witneſs, I provok'd him not.
'Tis not in Valour's Wiſh, to *offer* Inſult:
And ſure! it is no *Crime*, to check it, *offer'd*.

MEROPE.

On, then—relate the Chance, that led thee hither.

EUMENES.

Entring your Borders, I beheld a *Temple*,
Sacred to *Hercules*; the God, my Soul
Low, as my Lot was caſt, *aſpires* to Honour.
—What ſhou'd I do? bare Vot'ry as I was!
I had *no Off'rings:* brought no *Victims*, with me.
Poor, and oppreſs'd by Fortune, what I *cou'd*
I *gave*—I knelt, and pour'd a *Heart* before him,
Warm, as a hundred Hecatombs! pure, prideleſs,
Pious, and firm.—'Th' Unhappy *can* no more.
—Yet, humbly conſcious of my far-thrown Diſtance,
I aſk'd not, for *myſelf*, his undue Bleſſing.
I pray'd Protection, to his *own* high Race:
For, I had *heard*, Great Queen! your Wrongs *requir'd*
The *Preſent God*, methought, *receiv'd* my Prayer. [it.
His Altar trembled; and his Temple rung!
Keen, undulating, Glories beam'd, about me:
I know not how I *bore* it!—but, my Heart,
Full of the Force infus'd, at once grew *Vaſter*.
My ſwelling Courage, far *above myſelf*,
Inflam'd me:—and I *glow'd*, with All the *God*.

MEROPE. (*Riſing in Emotion.*)

Speak on. Methinks, the God thou nam'ſt ſpeaks *in*
And Ev'ry *Hearer* glows, as warm'd as Thou! [thee!

EUMENES.

I bow'd, and left the Temple.—Following, came
Two Men, of haughty Stride, with angry Lowre:
Roughly, accoſting, they reproach'd my Prayer.
How did I dare, they aſk'd, ſolicite Heaven,
To aid Sedition's Purpoſes? No God
Shou'd *ſave* a Wretch like me, preſcrib'd by Power.
—I heard, aſtoniſh'd; and prepar'd to ſpeak:

When,

When, with impatient Fierceneſs, Each rais'd Arm,
With Rage conjoin'd, came on.

MEROPE. *Interrupting.*

Both!—Came they, *Both*,
To wound thee?——

EUMENES.

Both, with more than Madman's Frenzy,
Struck at my Breaſt, ignobly.

MEROPE.

Thou has eas'd me.
Go on.--Theſe Men had Souls, that match'd their Fate.

EUMENES.

Un-arm'd, and inoffenſive, ſo ſurpriz'd,
The God I had addreſs'd *repaid* my Prayer.
—Warding the weakeſt Stroke, with ſwordleſs Hand,
Fiercely I clos'd, and ſeiz'd the wreſted Steel
From Him whoſe ſtronger Arm more nearly preſs'd me.
Seiz'd it with Light'ning's Swiftneſs: for, Diſtreſs
Rowſes the *weak*, to Vengeance.—On Himſelf,
I turn'd his pointed Weapon: ſav'd *my* Breaſt,
And plung'd it in His own.—He fell.—The Other
Started, and curs'd: but, like a Coward, *fled*,
Falſe to his dying Fellow.—Mighty Queen,
This is the ſad ſhort Truth. May the kind Power
I bow'd to, touch your Ear; and move your Pity!

MEROPE.

She were a Tygreſs, that cou'd hear this Tale,
And pauſe, upon thy Pardon.—Still, go on:
How wer't thou ſeiz'd? hide Nothing: and hope All.

EUMENES.

Shock'd by uncertain Dread for what was done,
And ignorant *Whoſe* the Blood; which, looking down,
I ſaw, guſh wide, and ſtain th' incircling Sand;
I gaz'd aſtoniſh'd round: and mark'd, beneath,
Where, at a Furlong's Diſtance, the Salt wave
Broke on the pebbly ſhore with mournful Murmur.
Sudden I ſnatch'd the Corps, from where It bled:
And, haſt'ning to the Beach, with *added Weight*,
(Appealing

(Appealing *Neptune*,) gave it to the *Sea*. [Queen,
That done, I sigh'd, and fled: Your Guards, great
For what escapes such Eyes, as *Heaven*'s, and *Yours!*
Unseen by me, mark'd all; follow'd, and took me.

MEROPE.—*To* Euricles.

Did he *resist*, when seiz'd?

EUMENES.

I *cou'd not*, Madam.
The Name of *Merope* disarm'd my *Will*.
They told me they were Yours. I bow'd, and yielded:
Gave 'em my new-gain'd *Sword:* and took their *Chains*.

EURICLES.

This Youth, by Him he kill'd, was judg'd *Another*.

MEROPE.

Oh! I have noted All: and Heaven was *just*.
—Retire, to farther Distance, gentle Youth.—
'Tis well. Wait, there, my Call.--I'll tell the, *Euricles!*
Methought, at every Word this Wanderer spoke,
Pity——or Something, *tenderer* than Pity,
Clung to my aking Heartstrings! nay, 'twas *stranger!*
For, I will tell thee All.—*Cresphontes*' Features,
My dear dead manly *Lord*'s resembled Features;
I saw, and trac'd, (I blush, to think what Folly!)
Trac'd,—in this Cottage Hero's honest Face.

ISMENE.

Compassion is a kind and generous Painter.
—Yet, Truth Herself must grow as *blind*, as Fortune,
Ere she cou'd look on That unhappy Youth;
And find him *less*, than worth her kindest Pity.

EURICLES.

Ismene speaks *my* Thoughts. He's innocent.
The Gods have stamp'd their Mark of Candor on him:
And no *Impostor's Art* inhabits there.

MEROPE. *To* Eumenes

Again, approach me.—In what Part of *Greece*
Did it please Heaven to give thee Birth, good Youth?

EUMENES. *Advancing.*

In *Elis*, generous Queen.

MEROPE.

MEROPE.

In *Elis*.——Tell me.
I hop'd, it had been nearer.—Haſt thou, ever,
In thy lowConverſe, heard the Swains, thyNeighbours,
Mention a Name, like *Narbas?*—or *Eumenes?*—
—The Laſt, thou *muſt* have heard of.

EUMENES.

Never, Madam.

MEROPE.

Never?--That's *ſtrange!* what then was thy Condition?
What thy Employment? and thy Father's Name?

EUMENES.

My Father was a *Shepherd*: learn'd, and wiſe;
Too humble, for Diſtinction—had not Virtue
Compell'd him, into Notice.—Shunning Praiſe,
He ſought Felicity, in ſilent Search
Of un-endang'ring Worth, and *inſelt* Greatneſs.
He liv'd un-envied: for, excelling All,
He veil'd ſuperior Eminence, by *Modeſty:*
And made Subjection *Sweet*, by Power's Humility.
No claim'd Exemption eas'd his Life from *Care:*
Peacefully poor! and reverently belov'd!
His fleecy Harveſts fed him:—and, his Name
Was *Policletes*, Madam.

MEROPE.

What Thy *Own?*

EUMENES.

Low, like my paſt'ral Care—to Cottage Ears
Adapted—and unform'd for *Queen*'s Regard.
—Yet, *Elis*, oft, will deign to ſpeak of—*Dorilas*.

MEROPE. (*Aſide.*)

Oh! I have loſt my Hope. Heaven mocks Relief:
And every ſtarting Spark is quench'd, in Darkneſs.
So, then, your Parents held no *Rank* in *Elis?*

EUMENES.

Did Place draw Claim from Goodneſs, they had held
Preferment, with the Higheſt—But their *Virtues*,
Left Room for *no* Enlargement.—*Native* Eminence

Borrows

Borrows no Rank from *Title* — but *lends* All,
That keeps *Contempt* from Greatneſs.

MEROPE.

Every Word
He utters has a Charm! —— But, *Why*, at home
So bleſs'd, and, to *ſuch* Parents, doubly dear,
Didſt thou, forgetful of the Care thou owd'ſt 'em,
Quit their kind *Cott*, and leave 'em to their *Tears?*

EUMENES.

A vain Deſire of *Glory*, firſt, ſeduc'd me.
Oft had I heard my Father mourn *Mycene*,
Weep, for her Civil Wars, and ſuff'ring *Queen*.
Oft, had He charm'd my young, aſpiring, Soul,
With Wonder, at your Firmneſs! —— So, inflam'd,
I learnt, by ſlow Degrees, to think ſtrong *Youth*
Diſgrac'd, by home-felt Virtues: Weigh'd the Call
Of Glory, againſt *Duty*; and grew bold
To hope, *my* humble Arm might add ſome Help,
To prop your warring Standards. — See! great Queen,
The ſole *Seduction*, of my erring Raſhneſs.
For, Heaven has taught me, tho' It loves *your* Cauſe,
I merit my Diſtreſs: who left my Father,
Wanting, perhaps, in Age's feeble Calls,
Some Aids, I might have lent him. — 'Twas a Fault.
But, 'twas my *firſt*: And I may live, to mend it.

MEROPE. [*aſide.*

Methinks, I hear *Eumenes* —— So, my Soul
Informs me, had *He* known Deſcent, thus lowly,
So, *My Eumenes* wou'd have thought, and ſpoke.
—Such, is his Age, where'er conceal'd he mourns:
Perhaps too, ſuch his Fortune—driven, like *This*,
From Realm to Realm, a Wand'rer, thus unknown!
Friendleſs, and hopeleſs, and expos'd to Poverty!
— Oh! what Compaſſion will not Woes we ſuffer
Inſpire, for *Other's* Sufferings! —— Too ſecure,
Thou ſtand'ſt, unfeeling Pride! and look'ſt not round thee.
— I will have Pity, on this Youth's Diſtreſs:
And cultivate his Fortune. —— What bold Noiſe?

[*Shouts heard without.*

Whence can ſuch Rudeneſs flow! —Look out, *Iſmene.*

ISMENE. [*at a Window.*

All Ills are *Poliphontes.* The vile Rabble
Shout their ſure Vote, for Treaſon. *Poliphontes*
Is *King*, proclaim'd,—and Hope is now no more.

EURICLES.

'Tis the *laſt* Evil.—Faith *may*, ſtill, find Friends.
All grow not giddy, when the Public *reels.*

EUMENES.

Oh! for the *Sword*, once more, your Guards took from me!
Now, now, I *feel* theſe Chains: Now, firſt, they *bind* me.

MEROPE.

Give him his Sword. Let him be free, as Air.
Honeſt Propoſer!——but, *Thy* Help's too weak,
To prop a Throne, in Danger. —— Wait, without,
Till this kind Lord conducts thee into Safety.

EUMENES.

O, Queen!—*forgive* Preſumption, in the *Poor*,
When *They* dare pity Greatneſs.

MEROPE.

Thou art Great;
By *Nature*'s Gift:——or, leſs than low, by *Art*'s!

EUMENES.

All have their Mis'ries.--but, when *Crowns* grow wretched,
'Tis Impudence, in *mean* ones, to complain.

[*Exit* Eumenes.

EURICLES.

Too fatally, I propheſied.——Confeſs
This hard Neceſſity: which, now, you find;
And *ſeem*, at leaſt, to ſooth the Tyrant's Hope.

MEROPE.

I miſconceiv'd the Gods. I durſt not dream,
They cou'd have bid Guilt thrive: and given up *Virtue.*

EURICLES.

They *will not*, Madam.

MEROPE.

So, my ſad Heart, ſtill,
Struggles to hope: and, if they mark my *Woe*,
They will forgive my *Raſhneſs.*

EURI-

EURICLES.

Come, what muſt!
I will aſſemble round you the few faithful,
And, failing to protect, partake your Fall.
[*Exit* Euricles.

SCENE III.

MEROPE. ISMENE.

MEROPE.

O, People! People! They, who truſt your Faith,
Bid the wild Winds blow conſtant.

ISMENE.

'Tis their Love,
Their ill-judg'd Tenderneſs, not Lightneſs, wrongs you.
They weigh your late-paſt Dangers, dread Renewal:
And wou'd ſecure, by this bold *Partner*'s Share,
Your nobler, in the Crown, His Power protects.

MEROPE.

Inſolent Care!—ſhall Subjects to my Son
Wed me to Inſult!——to the Hand I *hate!*

ISMENE.

They call the *People*'s Voice, the Voice of Gods.

MEROPE.

What villain Baſeneſs wants ſome bold Pretence
That drags in *Heaven*, to grace it? Thefts, Plots, Perjuries,
Avarice, Revenge, the bloody Zeal, of *Pride*,
And unforgiving Bitterneſs of Heart;
All,—have their Gods to friend! their Prieſts, to ſanctifie.

SCENE IV.

Merope, Iſmene. Euricles, with a Sword.

EURICLES.

Sorrows on Sorrows bear down Hope's laſt Prop.
Now, be a Queen, indeed!—arm your great Heart,

With Preparation, to its utmoſt Stretch:
—For, if it ſtands *this* Shock, its Power's immortal.

MEROPE.

No—I am ſinking, from all *Senſe* of Pain:
And ſhall grow *ſafe*, by Want of Strength to ſuffer.
Speak.—there is now but one ſad Truth to dread:
And my Soul waits it heard;—then, reſts, for ever.

EURICLES.

It has pleas'd Heaven—this *Sword!* this fatal *Sword!*

MEROPE.

I underſtand thee; thou woud'ſt ſay, he's *dead.*

EURICLES.

Oh! 'tis too ſurely ſo: th' atrocious Crime
At laſt, ſucceeded—and all Care is vain.

MEROPE.

Gods! Gods! —'tis done.—And all your Bolts have ſtruck me.

ISMENE.

Guard her diſtracted Brain!

EURICLES.

Save her, kind Heaven!

MEROPE.

Where have I been?

EURICLES.

Alas! where Grief, too often,
Has lodg'd, and left, th' Unhappy.——recollect.

MEROPE.

Oh! *Euricles:* I recollect, too much.

EURICLES.

Forget it—for a few ſhort Moment's Reſpite.

MEROPE.

Truſt my ſuſtaining Heart. It breaks not, *yet.*
Comfort's brief Cloud, methought, came ſhadowing, o'er me.
But I am *found*, again: a Wretch, ſo friendleſs,
That *Madneſs* will not lend Relief: but *ſhuns* me.

EURICLES.

Periſh, That young, that impious Hypocrite!
That ill-admir'd Attracter of your Pity:
Whom your Protection ſpar'd—for fancied Virtue!

ME-

MEROPE.

Who?—What?—

ISMENE.

Not Dorilas?

EURICLES.

Him, Him,—That *Dorilas.*

MEROPE.

Monſter! beyond all Credit of Deceit!

ISMENE.

He!——'tis impoſſible.

EURICLES.

He was the Murderer.
I bring too clear a Proof. Paſſing, but now,
I found him waiting: freed him from his Chains;
And, to re-arm him, for the Cauſe he choſe;
Call'd for his *Sword*—Which, as he ſtretch'd his Hand
To take, I mark'd, and trembled at the View,
Theſe once-known *Gems*—too well remember'd, *here!*

MEROPE—*taking the Sword.*

Oh, All ye ſleeping Gods! 'twas My *Creſphontes*!
'Twas the *King*'s Sword. *Narbas*, beyond all Doubting,
Sav'd it, that dreadful Night, for my *Eumenes*.
Oh! what a falſe vile Tale has this taught Fury,
This practis'd, art-accompliſh'd, Flatterer form'd,
To cheat us into Pardon!

EURICLES.

Heaven beſt knows,
What *Number* of Aſſociate Villains *join'd*,
To perpetrate this Crime! for, ah! too ſure,
No ſingle Murd'rer's Hand had Force to *dare*,
Far leſs to triumph o'er, a Prince like Ours.
No Blood of *Hercules* is ſhed ſo tamely.

MEROPE.

Take the dumb dreadful Witneſs from my Sight.
[*giving* Euricles *the Sword.*
Yet, ſtay.—return it me.—
[*reſumes the Sword—and kneels.*
—I *thank* ye—Gods!

Thank your inſpiring Juſtice: and *accept* it.
Live, *but* to thank you,—for this dire, due, Sacrifice;
Which, from the childleſs Mother's widow'd Hand,
Your Heav'n-directed Vengeance well *demands*.
[*She riſes.*
Yes. I will *ſheathe* it, on my Huſband's *Tomb*,
Deep, in the *bleeding Murd'rer*'s panting Heart;
Then, ſcorning *Poliphontes*, pierce my *own*;
So, die, reveng'd, and ſafe,—*abſolving* Heaven.
—Go, *Euricles*.—

EURICLES.

Not *ſo*.—Yet, *bear* his Sight:
That, from his own dire Mouth, we may compell
Diſcovery, of his Guilt's commiſſion'd *Cauſe*:
And, to the Bottom, ſearch this horrid Tale.
[*Exit* Euricles.

ISMENE.

Erox!——the Tyrant's Miniſter of Death.

SCENE V.

MEROPE. ISMENE. EROX.

EROX. [*aſide.*

Now, aid me, wily Powers of winning Art!

MEROPE.

How now! What bold Intruſion plac'd thee here?

EROX.

Queen, of the Kingdom's Lord! his Heart's high Empreſs!
Suffer a Voice unequal to the Taſk,
To wrong th' intruſted Senſe of *his* told Grief
Who ſends me to *condole* you.——*Poliphontes*,
Had you but ſmooth'd that Brow's Majeſtic Bend,
I meant to have ſaid, the *King*,—this Moment, heard
The Fate, moſt pitied, of the Prince, your *Son*
Heard, and takes equal Part, in all your Wrongs.

MEROPE.

More, than his Part, he takes, in what is Mine.
Elſe,

Elſe, had he never dar'd aſpire, to ſeize
His Maſter's Throne; nor *Name* my murder'd Son.

EROX.

Wiſhing, he waits but *Leave*. Reſpect is *delicate*,
And wou'd not, un-admitted, *now*, approach.
Fain wou'd he talk of Comfort, to *your* Sorrows,
Who, weeping, wants the Power to curb his *own*.

MEROPE.

What wou'd your artful Sender come, to *ſay?*

EROX.

To beg, that to *his* Hand you wou'd commit
This hateful Murd'rer's *Puniſhment*.—He glows
For Vengeance on ſuch Guilt. Shou'd think his Claim
Unworthy a Crown's Truſt; leſs worthy *yours*,
Cou'd he forget, that *Juſtice* props a Throne.

MEROPE.

No. Tell him *no*. My Hand revenges, *here*.
Too ſhort of Reach, Heaven knows! but, what it *can*
It *ſhall:* and neither aſks, nor bears, *his* Aid.

EROX.

The King too tenderly regards your Will,
To croſs it, ev'n in *Anger*.—leſs, in *Reaſon*.
—I humbly take my Leave.

MEROPE.

I grant it, gladly.

[*Exit* Erox.

Hunted on every Side, why waits Diſtreſs,
Till ſtill *new* Growths of Anguiſh, *more*, oppreſs?
How poor a Thing is *Life*, drag'd on to Age,
To ſtand, the pitied Mark, of Fortune's Rage!
Death ſhuts out Mis'ry: and can, beſt, reſtrain
The Rack of Inſult, and the *Wring* of Pain.

The End of the Second ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Tomb of CRESPHONTES.

NARBAS alone.

HAIL, venerable *Ghoſt!* hail, ſacred *Tomb!*
Hail, heartwept *Manes* of my *murder'd Lord!*
My *laſt* ſad Object, in *Mycene*'s Domes,
Was *Thy* majeſtic Eyebeam quench'd in Blood!
Now, late returning, my *own* dim old *Sight*
Weeps into *Blindneſs*, o'er this *King*'s *Laſt Bed:*
Where ſilent Marble veils imperial Duſt,
And ſpares, from All thy Power, but This poor *Stone*,
To *bound* Thy death-ſhrunk Reign!—yet, *here*, even HERE!
Sigh'd but *Eumenes* o'er this ſolemn Scene,
Narbas had *hop'd* to *ſoothe* Thy ſorrowing *Shade.*
How ſhall I meet his *Mother*'s mournful Eye,
Who bring *new* Weight, to Woes *o'ercharg'd before.*
From every madd'ning Street, I hear loud Shouts,
Thoſe execrable Bawds, to flatter'd Power!
Proclaim the Traitor *Poliphontes*, King.
He! who, from Clime to Clime, track'd our ſad Way!
Held, like a hunted Deer, his Prince, in Chace;
Hot in Purſuit, for *Murder*!—Each known Proſpect,
Each Point, each Outlet of this neighb'ring Palace,
Brings to afflicted Mem'ry ſome new Stroke
Of Sorrow, freſh to Pain—tho' fifteen Winters
Have ſnow'd their whiteneſs on me, ſince they fell!
Wou'd, I cou'd find the Face of ſome old Friend!
But, what Court Friendſhip's Life *laſts*, fifteen Winters;
—Soft. Whom has Heaven ſent, here! If Innocence—
Dwells yet on Earth, ſuch Looks as theſe muſt *houſe* it.
[*Starts, as* Iſmene *comes nearer.*

Bleſs

Bleſs the reſembled *Mother's* copied Softneſs!
'Tis my *Iſmene*: 'Tis my own dear *Daughter*.
Time cannot hide her, from a Parent's Eye:
Child as ſhe was—and chang'd ſince laſt I ſaw her.

SCENE II.

Narbas, Iſmene, *follow'd by a Train of Virgins in white, who bring Baskets, and ſtrew Flowers on the Tomb.*

ISMENE.

Who is this bold Unknown? So ſagely form'd!
Yet indiſcretely rude—at ſuch an Hour,
To break, abruptly, on the Queen's ſad Purpoſe!

NARBAS.

Faireſt, of Forms——

ISMENE.

Who *are* you?

NARBAS.

Chide me not,
Sweet Picture of the Powers, who ſhed ſoft Pity!
—I am a very friendleſs, weak, old Man.
Once, I was Servant, to the Queen *you* ſerve;
O, grant the gracious Privilege, to *ſee* her.

ISMENE.

Rev'rend, and Wiſe! The firſt, I ſee you *are*:
The laſt, my Heart conceives you—what a Time
Have your miſguided Wants unaptly choſen!
Your Sight wou'd, now, offend her.—Deep Diſtreſs,
From dire Solemnity of Purpoſe, brings her,
—Twere prudent to withdraw.

NARBAS.— [*in a low Voice.*

Come near—*Iſmené.*

ISMENE.

Immortal Powers! Who can it be?—He knows me!
Fain wou'd I mix wild *Hope*, with Fear and Wonder.
[*approaching him.*

NAR-

NARBAS.

Thou art my *Child*. Kind Heaven has ſent thee, to me.
—Be cautious—and obſerve.

ISMENE [*Kneeling.*

Prophetic Heart!
Oh, Sir—— I *cannot* ſpeak!

NARBAS, [*raiſing her.*

Hide thy Surprize,
Ere yet ſome dang'rous *Note* detects our Meeting.
—Soft as thy Eyes *Iſmene*, be thy *Voice*.
And anſwer, to my Queſtion— where is the Queen?

ISMENE.

She lives, this moment: but the next, ſhe *dies*.
Sorrowing ſhe comes,—to offer on this Tomb,
Her Life's *laſt* Sacrifice—a dreadful Victim!
—The *Murd'rer* of her *Son*.

NARBAS.

Eumenes, dead?—

ISMENE.

Alas, Sir! cou'd you be a Stranger to it?

NARBAS.

Blaſt! to my Soul's beſt Hope. — Who *dar'd* this Villainy?

ISMENE.

A Youth, who found him in *Alcides' Temple*.
One, from whoſe Air of manly Modeſty
None, ſurely cou'd have fear'd—behold! he *comes*.
That fetter'd Criminal is He.—— Oh, Sir!
Where will you, now, be hid?

NARBAS.

In Death, *Iſmene*:
If I now hear and ſee—and am not *dreaming!*

ISMENE.

From the Queen's Eye, I dare no longer.—

NARBAS [*holding her.*

Stay.
Queens, Kings, nor Gods, ſhall tear thee from my [Arm,
Till thou haſt heard me fully

ISMENE.

Speak—Command.

SCENE

SCENE III.

Solemn Proceſſion to a Dead *March.* Meropé. Euricles, *with the Sword.* Eumenes, *in Chains. Guards. Prieſts, as to Sacrifice.—The Queen goes up weeping, and kneels ſilent, at the Tomb. While the Reſt range themſelves, on each Side the Scene.*

NARBAS, to ISMENE.

Some black-ſoul'd *Fiend*, ſome Fury ris'n from Hell,
Has darken'd all Diſcernment!—Call'dſt thou not
That fetter'd Youth the *Murd'rer* of *Eumenes?*

ISMENE.

I call'd him ſo, too truly.

NARBAS.

He is *Eumenes.*

What angry God miſleads the Queen, to Madneſs?
She dreams *Eumenes kill'd*—and *kills Eumenes!*

ISMENE.

Now are my Heart's late Tremblings well explain'd.
Quick let me ruſh, and *warn* her erring Hand.

NARBAS.

Not, for a thouſand Worlds—to ſave him, *So,*
Were but to loſe him, *Surer.*——*Poliphontes*
Has Ears and Eyes too near us.—*Pray*; and be dumb.

Sad and ſolemn Muſick. Then a SONG, of Sacrifice: by Mr. Beard, *as Chief Prieſt.*

I.

Hear, from the dark and ſilent Shade!
Hear, ye pale Bands of *Death!*
Gliding from *Graves*, where once your *Bones* were laid,
Receive a Murd'rer's Breath.

Chorus, of Prieſts and Virgins.

Receive a Murd'rer's Breath.

II.

Doom'd to *atone* the Blood he drew,
Fates! lend your *Ebon Bowl.*
Take the devoted Stream, to Vengeance due,
And *catch* the parting Soul.

Chorus,

Chorus, of Prieſts and Virgins.

And *catch* the parting Soul.

MEROPE, riſing and coming forward.

Where is this Victim—odious, to All Powers,
But *one*,—the dreadful *Nemeſis?*

The Guards bring up Eumenes.

EURICLES.

Yet, er'e he dies,
'Twere fit, ſome Force of Torture ſhould compell him
To name his vile Accomplices.

MEROPE.

It *ſhall.*
Say, Monſter! what provok'd thee to this Guilt:
And what Aſſociates join'd thee.

EUMENES.

I appeal
The Gods, who find it fit my Soul ſhou'd buy,
At this dear Rate, the Moment's Hope you lent it;
Thoſe *Gods* can *witneſs* for me; They! who curſe
The perjur'd, and diſclaim the Baſe one's Safety.
My Lips deteſt Impoſture: bold, and clear
As Day's unſullied Light, they trace Truth, *plainly.*
—Nor know I, by what Change, in Heav'ns high Will,
I, who of late ſo bleſs'd, had touch'd your *Pity*,
Fall, now, beneath your *Anger!*

MEROPE, taking the Sword, from Euricles.

View this Sword.
Know you the dreadful Object.

EUMENES.

Twas the Villain's,
My juſt Hand puniſh'd with it.

MEROPE.

Seize him. Rend him.
Swift to the trembling Altar, drag the Traitor.
He *owns* it! glories, in his bloody Crime:
And my ſhock'd Soul *akes*, at him.

The Guards ſeize him.

EUMENES.

EUMENES——*ſtruggling.*

Off——away——

Stay your reſiſted Rage.—I *will* be heard;
One laſt loud Word—in Spite of Arms and Inſult.

MEROPE—*after a Signal to the Guards, who quit* Eumenes.

Thou then, who deal'ſt in Death, can'ſt find Death fearful.

EUMENES.

No, Madam! you miſtake. Death ſhakes the *happy:*
But He who is a Wretch receives him gladly.
—Yet, 'gainſt imputed Guilt, the humbleſt, wrong'd,
Riſe, in bold Innocence, reſign'd, no longer.
—Low as I am, and you ſo rais'd in Power,
Were not your *Griefs* more awful than your *Anger*,
I had reproach'd your Rage, and blam'd your Blindneſs.
—Tell me, nor let your Pride deface your Pity,
Whoſe, ſo high-rated Blood was This I ſhed?
And what new Int'reſt finds he, in your Favour?
—If he was dear to *You*, curs'd be my Memory,
Or I had rather loſt my *Own*, than *His*.

MEROPE.

Where has this cruel Wretch been taught Deceit?
Why was that Look, ſo like *Creſphontes*, His!

Half fainting.

EURICLES.

Great Queen! ſuſtain your Purpoſe. Think of *Vengeance.*
The Laws of Nature,—and the Lives of Kings.

EUMENES.

Do Laws and Kings, then, call Injuſtice *Vengeance?*
Shame on the Great! why long'd my Eyes for *Courts?*
Courts, where the Pride of Guilt lays Claim to Honour.
—Haughty of Heart, why have they Souls thus abject?
You threaten, praiſe, fright, flatter, and inſult me!
—Gods! what a creeping climbing, hot cold, Creature,
Is this big little Flutt'rer, call'd a *Courtier!*
—Yet, oh! twas *juſt*.—I left my Father, raſhly;
Felt not HIS Pangs: weigh'd not the Tears I coſt him.
Fate drew me from my Foreſt's crimeleſs Quiet,

Into

Into the World's loud Insignificance;
Deaf to the Warnings of a Father's Wisdom:
And a griev'd Mother's Bodings.

MEROPE.

Mother, said he!
Barbarian! ha'st thou yet a *Mother*, left thee?
I *was* a Mother, too.——till Thy *fell* Hand
Depriv'd me of a *Son*—and all Life's Comforts.

EUMENES.

A Son!——*your* Son?

MEROPE.

Mine, Monster! Murd'rer! Mine.

EUMENES.

If *Such* was my Misfortune, Such my *Curse*,
If Heaven has made it *possible*——that He,
Who, in a fatal Moment, err'd—and fell
By my ill-destin'd Rashness, was *Your* Son,
Earth holds not such another Wretch as I am!
And Mercy's fainteſt Glimpse shou'd shun to reach me.

MEROPE.

Perfidious, execrable Slave!

EUMENES.

Yet, *hear* me.

Eumenes, *here, offers to speak, and* Merope *interrupts him.*

—Stop his detested Mouth.—If thou dar'st *pray*.
Raise thy dumb *Hands:* and ask, in vain, from Heaven,
The Mercy, thou denied'st my dying Son.
Force the doom'd Victim to the Altar's Foot,
Veil him from *Light*, no more to be beheld:
Hide his quench'd *Eyes*, for ever.

Two Priests approaching, with a Veil, he snatches it, and throws it from him.

EUMENES.

Off! ye vain *Forms!*
Cover the Eyes of *Cowards:* Mine disdain ye.
Mine can, with stedfast and *advancing Scorn*,
Look in Death's *Face*, full-sighted.—When It comes
Tis to be *met*, not *hid*.—On.—I *provoke* it.

Welcome,

Welcome, Eternal Day!——*Bad World*, farewel.

Advances, between the Prieſts, to the Tomb—follow'd by the Queen, Euricles, Iſmene, *&c.*

MEROPE. At the Tomb—with the Sword drawn, and Eumenes *kneeling ready.*

Shade, of my Murder'd *Huſband!—hear* my Call.

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Oh! hear.

MEROPE.

Soul, of my bleeding *Son!* hear, *thou—*

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Oh! hear.

MEROPE.

Un-expiated Souls!—if, in thoſe Glooms,
Where walk the ſullen Ghoſts of earth-wrong'd Kings,
You hear Atonement's Voice, and wait Redreſs,
Riſe, from your dark Domains!

Chorus, of Singer's Voices.

Oh! riſe.

MEROPE.

——*Thou*, laſt,
Tremend'ous Power! pale Goddeſs! preſent, ſtill,
To direful *Vengeance!* nerve this lifted Arm,
And *thus* aſſiſting——

Iſmene *preventing the Blow*, Narbas *breaks into Sight, and cries out loudly*,

Stay, *Stay* that bloody Purpoſe.
Death has already been too buſy, here:
And Heaven diſclaims ſuch Sacrifice.

MEROPE, in a frighted and trembling Attitude, Who *art* thou?

ISMENE—aſide—to the Queen.

Your Victim is your *Son*,——the Prince, *Eumenes.*

Meropé *lets fall the Sword—aſtoniſh'd, and trembling.*

EUMENES—raiſing himſelf to look round.

I heard a well-known Voice, now heard no longer.
Emerge, ſad Eyes! once more, from the Graves Brink,
To view what *ſeem'd*—oh! tis—It is—My *Father!*

Narbas.

NARBAS aside, to EUMENES.

Hear: and be dumb. Thy Fate, unwary Youth!
Depends upon thy *Silence*.

EUMENES.

Whence, ye dark Powers!
Can all these Myst'ries rise!

MEROPE.

Oh!—'tis too much—
And Life and I are *lost*.

Faints: and is supported by Ismene.

ISMENE.

Stay your unhallow'd *Rites:* the Queen's in Danger.

EURICLES.

Lend us your loyal Help, ye *Virgin* Train.

The Virgins advance.

Quit, rev'rend *Priests!* quit your too bloody Sacrifice.

Exeunt Priests.

And you, ye watchful *Guards!* draw near, and follow.
While I secure the *Victim* for his Fate.

NARBAS — to EUMENES.

Shun me: and patient wait th' important *Cause*.

EUMENES.

O, bid me, er'e I die, but hope your Pardon:
And, if I leave *you* bless'd—'tis all my Prayer.

NARBAS.

No more.—The Gods, who love, *reward* thy Virtue!

The Soldiers, and Euricles, *go off, with* Eumenes.

ISMENE.

Kind Heaven restores the Queen.

NARBAS.

Off.—give her Air.

MEROPE.

Where!—whither have ye brought me?—Where is *Euricles?*
—*Ismene?*—what means This!—Why weep my Virgins?
—Oh! I have *kill'd* him: — *looking wildly round her*— for I see him *not:*
And I am doom'd to Pains, in Life immortal.

NARBAS.

NARBAS.

Eaſe your ſad Heart's too apprehenſive Startings.
Euricles holds him ſafe: And nothing's known.

MEROPE'.

Still this kind Viſion haunts me.—Art thou *Narbas?*

NARBAS.

Let my *Tears* anſwer——in this Guſh of Joy—
I give you back my Maſter——your *Eumenes.*

MEROPE' (on her Knees.)

Oh, gracious Heaven! ſupport a Woman's Weakneſs:
And, what my *Heart*, yet panting, fails to *utter*,
Take, from my Soul's touch'd Senſe; and *make* my Prayer.
You are too *Great*, for Thanks! too *Good*, for Duty!
[*Riſes.*

EURICLES (re-entering haſtily.

Death! to th' inſatiate Tyrant's Thirſt of Inſult!
——This Royal Scandal, to the Name he ſteals,
Has, with ſome fatal Purpoſe, *ſeiz'd* the King;
And holds him, to examine.

MEROPE'.

Follow me.
Now ſhall he ſee, what *Marks* denote the *Queen*;
What *Diff'rence*, 'twixt the Guilty, and the Wrong'd.

NARBAS (going.)

Madam!——It muſt not be.

EURICLES.

Stay: Curb this Raſhneſs.

MEROPE'.

Is he not mine! Is he not *yours?*—your *King?*

EURICLES.

The Moment you confeſs That dang'rous Truth,
No God, but hated *Hymen*, ſaves *Eumenes.*

MEROPE'.

There, thou haſt let in Light, upon my Soul,
That crowds it with black Shapes, and frights Diſdain!
——Rather than *wed* this *Poliphontes.*——

NARBAS.

Wed him?
WED——*Poliphontes!*

EURICLES.

Him.

NARBAS.

The World's laſt Groan,
Wrapt in ſurrounding Fires, had *leſs* amaz'd me!

EURICLES.

'Tis with That View the People call him *King*.
Since he reveng'd *Creſphontes' Blood*, they ſay,
He, beſt———

NARBAS.

He!—Every Curſe of Death ſurround him!
He! He reveng'd!—The Villain's own damn'd Train
Shed,—*ſpilt* it. I beheld 'em: Trac'd the *Fiend*
Thro' all his dark Diſguiſes——thro' Night's Eye
Saw the pale Murd'rer Stalk, amidſt his Furies.
His was the half-hid Torch,——the Poſtern Key,
That open'd to the Rebel's Rage the Palace.
—In the pierc'd infant Breaſts of *two* doom'd Innocents,
I *ſaw* him plunge his Poignard: Twice receiv'd it,
Deep, in my *own*, encumber'd with my Charge:
Struggling, to bear the third *ſav'd* Prince to ſhelter;
And, track'd by my own Blood, with Pain eſcap'd him.

MEROPE.

When will my growing Horrors reach their *End!*
Oh! my fix'd Hate was *Inſtinct*. Something, fatal,
Dwelt on his dreadful Brow, and bad me *ſhun* him.
Blind! headlong! ill-diſcerning! noiſe-driv'n People!

EURICLES (looking out.)

Darkneſs and Death involve me, but he *comes!*

MEROPE.

Can the Gods leave That *poſſible?*——the Monſter!
But, He who puts on Guilt, muſt caſt off Shame.
——*Narbas*, be *hid*, this Moment—— [*Exit* Narbas.
——— *Euricles!*
Fly thou——find Acceſs to my mournful Son:
See him ſet free——but keep the Secret from him.
[*Exit* Euricles.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

Meropé, Iſmené, Poliphontes *in Nuptial Robes*, Erox, *and Train.*

POLIPHONTES.

Health, to my *Sovereign*, *late!* Now—ſo the States
Decree——my *Wife!*——my Siſter! and my Soul!
Dreſs'd is the Altar; and the Prieſts attend.
——Nay, do not turn aſide, and ſhun your Triumph.
Look——and admire the Wonders of your Power!
The God of Love, to-day, ſmoothes all my Wrinkles:
And I am taught by Joy to ſmile back *Youth.*
——One Care alone precedes impatient Love.
They tell me, your too tender Heart *recoil'd*:
And *loſt* your purpos'd Vengeance.——Let it *be.*
Beauty was meant to *wound*, a gentler Way.
Mine, be the Stroke of Juſtice.——When I view
This murd'rous Stripling, thro' the Grief he brought you,
Pity diſdains his Cauſe; and Fate *demands* him.

MEROPE.

I find myſelf, 'tis true, too weak, for Vengeance.
Wou'd I had Power, more equal to my Wrongs!

POLIPHONTES.

Leave it to *Me*: 'Tis a King's Right.——I *claim* it.

MEROPE.

I ſhall *conſider* of it.

POLIPHONTES.

Why; what doubt you?
Slackens your Anger? that your Vengeance heſitates!
Is your Son's Mem'ry now, leſs dear, than lately?

MEROPE.

Periſh, the *Will*, that wrongs him! but, this Murd'rer,
This *Youth*——they tell me you ſuſpect Accomplices—
Were it not prudent to ſuſpend his Fate,
'Till he declares, who join'd him?

POLIPHONTES.

What expect you
To clear, beyond your Son's known Fall?

MEROPE.

His *Father's*——

That was a Cup of *Gall.*—Oh! conſcious Guilt!
How dumb, thy Voice, unlook'd-for, ſtrikes the Bold!
[*Aſide.*

POLIPHONTES (after a Pauſe.)

Well—ev'n of That too, We ourſelf will ask him.

MEROPE.

You are too buſy, Sir! in a Purſuit,
That, leaſt, admits *your* Quick'ning.

POLIPHONTES.

Strange Perplexity!
That what moſt ſeeks your Eaſe ſhou'd moſt *offend!*
But, ſpring it, whence it may, the *Cauſe* remov'd,
There, ends the Doubt, and Pain.——This Wretch
ſhall *die.* [*Going.*

MEROPE.

Barbarian! horrible, inhuman———*Sir!*
Why have you ſought to ſtartle me?——I fear'd——
You meant to ſnatch my Victim from—my Vengeance.

POLIPHONTES.

But——ſhall he *really* die?

MEROPE.

Die!—*Who?*—He—die?

POLIPHONTES.

This Murd'rer of your Son.

MEROPE.

I go, this Moment;
And will, alone, examine him.

POLIPHONTES.

Stay, Madam.
This new Embarraſſment, of mingled Pains;
This Tenderneſs in Rage; theſe Hopes, Fears, Startings,
This Art, to colour ſome ill-hid Diſtreſs,
That caſts *Confuſion* o'er your troubled Soul:
Half Sentences, broke ſhort; Looks, fill'd with Horror,
Are Nature's thin *Diſguiſe*, to cover Danger.
—Something you will not *tell* alarms my Caution;

And

And bids my ſummon'd *Fear* take Place of Love.
——In ent'ring, here, I had a Glimpſe, but now,
Of an old Man, who ſeem'd to ſhun my Preſence.
Why is he fled?———Who was he?

MEROPE.

Scarce yet call'd
A *King*—and ſee! already fill'd with Jealouſies!

POLIPHONTES.

Be kind, and bear your Part, then.—Burthens, ſhar'd,
Preſs light the eas'd Suſtainers.—Come; your Hand.

MEROPE.

A Moment ſince, you talk'd but of Revenge:
Now, 'tis again all Love——Away: Keep ſeparate,
Two Paſſions, Nature never, yet, ſaw join'd.

POLIPHONTES.

Let it be ſo, then. Death ſhall ſtrait remove
That Obſtacle: And but one Wiſh remains.
Follow, at Leiſure, *you:* While I prepare.
[*Exit* Poliphontes.

MEROPE.

Act for me, now, and ſave me, Great *Alcides!*
To Power like thine, all Things are poſſible:
And Grief, oppreſs'd on Earth, finds Friends in Heaven.
Then when the woe-preſs'd Heart is tir'd with Care,
And every *human* Proſpect bids *deſpair*,
Break but one Gleam of *heav'nly* Comfort, in;
And a new Race of *Triumphs*, thence, begin.

End of the Third Act.

ACT. IV. SCENE I.

The Caſtle of *Poliphontes.*

Poliphontes. Erox.

POLIPHONTES.

SHE has *her* Views, I mine.—I ſhou'd have fear'd,
Some Hint's officious Note had reach'd her Ear;

I ſhou'd have dreamt, her Eyes had catch'd ſome Glance,
Some glimm'ring Entrance for admitted Light,
To guide *Diſcovery*, down the dark Abyſs,
Where my cloſe Crime lies *veil'd*. in dumb Obſcurity.
——But, that I know, ſhe is a WOMAN—*Erox!*
And *born* to be capricious.

EROX.

Pride—not Diſtaſte,
Holds out her Heart, againſt you.

POLIPHONTES.

Let her keep it.
My Hope is humbler, *Erox*. 'Tis her Hand
I ſeek: *Hearts* are Girls' Gifts to School-boy Lovers.
Now, let her Spleen ſtart wild. When Time ſerves aptly,
Means ſhall be found to curb it.—Thou art come
From ſounding this fierce captive Son of Wonder.
What have thy Thoughts concluded?

EROX.

'Tis not *He*.
No Race of *Hercules* need, there, alarm you.
This but ſome wood-born Brave, of artleſs Honeſty;
Void of Ambition's Flame: Bold, blunt and honeſt:
Fearleſs of Menace, taſteleſs of Reward,
And ſimply wanting *Will*, to dare, for Power.
He cannot be *Eumenes*.

POLIPHONTES.

Who, then, is he?

EROX.

He ſays he is a *Shepherd*'s Son:——what, more,
He will not be provok'd, nor brib'd, to tell.
Firm without Fierceneſs; without Weakneſs, gentle:
Open as Day-light: yet, as dumb, as Death!
Spite of my Prejudice, he forc'd my Praiſe;
And *Hatred* muſt admire him.

POLIPHONTES,

Praiſe him on.
Be what, or whom, he may, 'tis fit he *die*.
My Foes, too num'rous, taught me Skill, too try'd,

To

To lean my Hope's light Truſt on harlot Fortune.
The *People*, who conclude his Puniſhment
Inflicted, for *Eumenes'* fanſied Murder,
Will dream that Race *extinct*; and cleave to *Me*.
So Danger comes leſs near: Nor ſhakes my Throne.
—What haſt thou learnt, of that conceal'd Preſumer,
Who, when the Arm of *Merope* was rais'd,
Reſtrain'd it, with ſome Power that touch'd her Soul.

EROX.

The young Man call'd him *Father*. Chance, it ſeems,
In that nice Moment, brought him to his View.
He mov'd the Queen's Compaſſion, for his Son,
Fled, like a Wanton, from the Good Man's Care,
Who, in his Search, came ſorrowing on, from *Elis*.

POLIPHONTES.

I cannot truſt this Tale. Thou grow'ſt too credulous,
Myſterious Caution hangs too thick a *Veil*
O'er all their late Proceedings. That old Man,
Left the Queen's Preſence, ſtarting, at my Entrance,
Why was he hid, if a young Ruſtick's Father?
Why ſhou'd *my* coming fright him? He has heard
Since then, his Son's redoubled Danger dwells
But in *my* Menace: Yet he comes not near me.
I had, ere now, beheld him at my Feet,
Had his Heart trembled with a Father's Terrors.
—No matter who he is.——He moves my Fear;
And, ere my Eye-lids cloſe, he ſleeps, in Death.

EROX.

See, Sir! he's *free*—and mark—the Queen, how *near!*

POLIPHONTES.

I note it, and determine.
——Now! my Siſter.

SCENE II.

Poliphontes, Erox, Meropé, Iſmené, Euricles, Eumenes, and Guards.

MEROPE.

You ſee, Sir! I dare know, and *uſe*, my Rights,
How had your Will preſum'd to hold my Victim?

Am I but Queen of Shadows? that my Vengeance
Muſt move, as *you* direct it?

POLIPHONTES.

Nobly urg'd!
The Victim is your Right, requires *your* Hand:
Mine had defac'd your Juſtice.—I aſſum'd
Pretence to aid it, but to fire your Languor.
Take Courage. I reſign him. With his Blood
Waſh this reluctant Faintneſs, from your Heart:
And give it Warmth to meet me at the Altar.

MEROPE.

Horrid, and impious, Hope!

POLIPHONTES.

Looks *Love* ſo frightful?

EUMENES to *Poliphontes.*

Who taught thee to aſſociate Love, with *Cruelty?*
What Right has *Cupid* to a Captive's Blood?
—Yet, miſpreſume not, that I court thy Pity—
He has too poor a View from Life, to *prize* it,
Whoſe Death can only ſerve, to ſhorten *Pain.*
—But, I am told, Thou call'ſt thyſelf a *King.*
Know, if thou *art* one, that the Poor have Rights:
And Power, in all it's Pride, is *leſs* than *Juſtice.*
—I am a Stranger,—innocent,—and friendleſs,—
And That Protection, which thou *ow'ſt*, to All,
Is doubly due, to me:——For, I'm unhappy.

POLIPHONTES.

Protection is for *Worth*:—Guilt calls for Vengeance.

EUMENES.

And what does Wrong's licentious *Inſult* call for?
—In my own juſt Defence, I *kill'd* a Robber:
Law call'd it *Murder*; and the Queen condemn'd me.
Queens may *miſtake*. Ev'n *Gods*, who LOVE, grow *partial.*
I pardon, ev'n th' Injuſtice, of a *Mother:*
And cou'd have bleſs'd *her* Hand, beneath the Blow.
Nature has Weakneſſes, that *err* to Virtue?

—But,

—But, What haſt *Thou* to do with Mother's Vengeance?
Law, that ſhocks *Equity*, is *Reaſon's* Murder.

POLIPHONTES.

So young! ſo wretched!— and ſo *arrogant!*
Methinks, the Pride of an *Alcides'* Blood
Cou'd ſcarce have ſwell'd a Soul to loftier *Boldneſs!*

MEROPE'.

Pity preſumptuous Heat. 'Tis Youth's Prerogative,
To triumph in Imprudence. Bred, in Cotts,
Far from a Court's Politeneſs, How ſhould He [ons?
Have learnt Diſguiſe of Thought? or Power's Pretenſi-

POLIPHONTES.

Mean while, how happy ſuch unpoliſh'd Plainneſs!
To move Defence, from Art ſo ſkill'd as *Yours.*

MEROPE'. (aſide.)

Oh! my unguarded Terror!——You are *pleaſant.*

POLIPHONTES.

And You are wond'rous *kind!* Your Son, ſure! *lives.*

MEROPE'.

Lives! and *ſhall* live. I truſt him to the *Gods:*
They *can*—they *did*, protect him.

ISMENE'. (aſide.)

Madam! Madam!

EURICLES. (aſide.

Her fear-mix'd Anger will betray her Cauſe.

POLIPHONTES.

What cannot Woman's Pity! None, who marks
The willing Pardon your ſoft Looks inſure him,
Can charge your Heart with Cruelty.

MEROPE'.

My Looks,
Perhaps, hint Meanings, Prudence ſhou'd decline
To lend too loud a *Tongue* to.——but, there *are*,
Whoſe *Heart ſpeaks* Nothing: Yet *tells All*, by Actions.

POLIPHONTES.

Mark, if I ſpeak not, *now*, my Heart's true Language.
——*Traitor! receive thy Doom.* [*Drawing his Sword.*

MEROPE' (interpoſing)

Strike *here*, *here*, Murd'rer!
Menace *my* Breaſt; not His.

POLIPHONTES.

Whose Heart speaks, *now?*

EUMENES.

Now, ye Immortals! not to *die*, were, *not*
To triumph.——To be pitied, *here! thus*, pitied!
By such a Queen as *Meropé!*———'tis Glory
That every Power beneath a *God* might envy!

POLIPHONTES.

If you wou'd have him live, confess, *Who is he?*

MEROPE'.

He——— is———

EURICLES (to Ismené.*)*

Oh! we are lost,

ISMENE'.

All, all, is hopeless,

POLIPHONTES.

If he has Right in *You*, be swift to *own* him:
Or, *lose* him by your Silence.

[*Offers to kill* Eumenes.

MEROPE'.

Stay——— he is———

POLIPHONTES.

Who? What?——— say, quickly.

MEROPE'.

He is *My* Son, *Eumenes.*

POLIPHONTES (starting, and aside.)

'Tis as I *fear'd*; and all my Schemes are Air.

[*Stands pensively fix'd.*

EUMENES.

Gods!———Did I hear *That*, rightly?

MEROPE' (embracing him)

Thou *art* my Son.
Cresphontes was thy Father. I attest it:
I tell it, to the *Winds:* Proclaim it———boast it.
Hear it, *Thou* Soul of Murder! I have *found* him:
And, if I lose him, *now*, whole Heaven shall *curse* thee.

EUMENES.

I cannot comprehend it!———Yet, I kneel,

To

To *thank* you——but for deigning to *deceive* me.
Bleſs'd is his Fate, who dies, in ſuch a *Dream!*

MEROPE'.

One way, thou *art* deceiv'd.—The Mother's Love
Forgets the Monarch's Danger.———*Poliphontes!*

POLIPHONTES (ſtarting)

Go on——I meditated——but——*ſpeak*, Madam

MEROPE'.

Thou now haſt wrung, from my affrighted Heart,
The *Secret*, that oppreſs'd it. Thou behold'ſt
Thy *King*, diſtreſs'd, before thee.—*Sigh*, if thou can'ſt,
Sigh,—for the Son, Prince, Mother——Fame, and Nature.

POLIPHONTES.

How to reſolve will aſk ſome needful Pauſe.
—Mean while, it ſhakes my Faith, to truſt your Story.
You hear, the young Man's Honeſty *diſclaims*
This Greatneſs, you wou'd lend him.

EUMENES.

Modeſt Senſe
Of my unequal Worth compell'd ſome Doubting;
But, *now*, 'tis Truth conteſtleſs. Royal *Tears*
Flow not for pitied *Falſehood*; and *they* prove it.

MEROPE'.

Tears touch not Hearts of Flint; and I will ſpare 'em.
Bid your * *Pride* hear me——for, your Pity *cannot*.
(* *kneels*)
See me an humble Suppliant, at your Feet,
Now firſt confeſſing I can *fear* your Anger.
This ſhou'd, beyond all Proof of Tears, *convince* you,
That *Merope*'s his *Mother*.—— Still, you frown:
Forgetful of paſt *Soothings*.——But—this Morning,
You, cruel! *You*,——aſpir'd——to be his Father.
Once, he *cou'd* boaſt a Father!——how he *loſt* him,
Heaven *knows*, howe'er it ſpeaks not!——I deſiſt
To *aſk*, that dreadful Secret. I forget
My own long Sorrows——all my Wrongs, and Inſults:
Smile to the future——and abſolve the paſt.
—Let him *but breathe*—to reign, were to be *wretched*;
Where

Where Kings, who dare live juſt, muſt die unhappy.
—Cruel! you anſwer nothing!——look leſs *dreadful.*
Hear with your *Eyes*, if your clos'd Ears are *Iron.*
Eaſe my diſtracted Soul——and ſpeak ſome *Comfort.*

EUMENES.

O, Madam! quit that *Poſture.*——My proud Heart
Aſpires to *keep* the Glory you have lent it.
——If I, indeed, was born, to call you Mother,
Why do I ſee and hear you, *not* a *Queen?*

[*Raiſes her.*

I know not, to what Rights a *King* is born:
But, ſure! he no where falls to leſs than *greateſt.*
—Nor think my Soul too haughty:—For, *What* Scorn
Can treat the Proud, too proudly? No Diſtreſs
Abſolves *Dejection:* 'Tis the Brave's *Prerogative,*
To feel, without *complaining. Hercules,*
Before He was a *God*, was, oft, *unhappy.*
What an unmaſt'ring Monarch muſt *he* make,
Who reigns not o'er *Adverſity!*——*Strike*, Tyrant——
Courage, reſtrain'd from *Act*, takes Pride to *ſuffer.*

POLIPHONTES (*to* Meropé)

'Tis well. I have, with juſt Attention, heard;
And, in impartial Silence, weigh'd it, all.
Your Sorrow claims ſome Right to call for mine:
And *his* high *Spirit* charms me. I have mark'd
Each Movement of his Mind, and *muſt* eſteem him.
——Yet further—— I confeſs, he well *deſerves*
To ſhare the Blood of *Kings:* But, that he *does*
Is either Falſehood, or a Truth ſo doubtful,
As brooks no *paſſion*'d Evidence.——I take him

[*Takes* Eumenes *by the Hand.*

Into my heedful Care; remit his Sentence,
And, if found *Yours*, adopt him as my Son.

EUMENES.

Yours, ſaid you?——*You!* my Father!

MEROPE.

Oh! be patient.

POLIPHONTES.

You rule his Deſtiny. You know what Price
I rate his Life at. Smile; and meet my Wiſhes.

MEROPE.

Inhuman Menacer!

POLIPHONTES.

Kind *Love* has ſent
This Youth, to ſave my Heart, from near Deſpair.
Yours is too tenderly devoted *His*,
To anſwer with Imprudence. Weigh, and chuſe.
For, may the Gods, conjointly, curſe my Reign,
If he *ſurvives* Refuſal of my Prayer!
——— Bethink you. In an *Hour*, I ſhall expect you;
Where, at the Altar, to th' atteſting Powers,
You may proclaim your *Choice*. That Moment makes him
My *Victim*, or my *Son*. 'Till then, farewell.

MEROPE.

You *cannot* be ſo cruel.———Leave *him*, with me.
To *ſee* him, might perſuade me.

POLIPHONTES.

See him, *there*:
See him, in *Hymen*'s *Temple*.

EUMENES.

Oh, Queen! oh, Mother!
If I, already, dare aſſume a Right
To call you, by that dear, that awful Name:
Think, nothing, that may miſbecome *your* Glory ——
Do, nothing, that may mix Contempt, with *mine*.
——— I leave you to the Care of Heaven; and *die*.

SCENE III.

Meropé, Euricles, Iſmené.

MEROPE.

Fly, follow, *Euricles!* hold thy kind Eye
Fix'd, to this Miſcreant's Motions. Fain would I dream,
He threatens, but to fright me.

EURICLES.

EURICLES.

Willing Hope
So flatters, to deceive you. Too, too ſure,
His Purpoſe! Ev'n by Nature, ſtern and bloody,
How *more*, when Power and Safety prompt his Cruelty!
[*Exit* Euricles.

MEROPE.

Find thy good Father: Haſte *Iſmené*; call him.
Tell him, Diſtreſs grows headſtrong, and my Soul
Sickens, for want of Counſel.

ISMENE, (*Aſide.*)

What a Blindneſs
Is Thirſt of human Grandeur! Give me, Gods!
A Cottage, and Concealment. Save the Queen;
And, from the Curſe of Courts, remotely place me.
[*Exit* Iſmene.

MEROPE Alone.

No, there is none; no Ruler of the Stars,
Regardful of my Miſeries.——What Crime
Has drawn theſe Tortures on me?——I have been
Too inſolent, perhaps, in Youth's proud Joy;
And felt not, as I ought, for *other*'s Sorrows.
Thence, came this Tempeſt of Affliction o'er me,
And my ſucceeding Years have, all, been Horror.
Oh, my lov'd Son! my Eyes have loſt thee, *ever*.
I ſhall no more ſnatch Comfort, from thy Hopes,
Or wonder at thy Sweetneſs.——All thy *Father*
Found me, *again*, in Thy renew'd Perfection;
And Death had given him back, with *added Greatneſs*.
Why have the Deities permitted this?
Why have they *ſported* with a Mortal's Mind,
Unpitying it's Diſtraction? ſent him to me
From a far diſtant Land? Sent him, for what!
To glut the Murd'rer's *Sword*, who kill'd his Father.
——Yet, you are *juſt*, ye Gods!—Amazing Darkneſs
Dwells o'er th' Eternal Will, and hides all *Cauſe*.
I muſt not dare to tax Almighty Power,
For what I ſuffer from it. Let it but *pay* me

With

With That curs'd Tyrant's *Puniſhment* attain'd:
Let me but ſee myſelf depriv'd of *Him* ——
See him expell'd, from Light, from Earth, from Name,
Deep, as the chearleſs Voids below can plunge him!
And I will * kneel, a Wretch, and *thank* your Juſtice.
(kneeling)*

SCENE IV.

Meropé, Iſmené, Narbas.

NARBAS.

Oh! Queen! beſt ſhewn by Woes! What *Wrongs* are yours!

MEROPE' riſing.

Yes, *Narbas*,——I *have* ſacrific'd my Son——
Have given him up, to Death—have, madly, *own'd* him.
Yet, pity me, good *Narbas!* —— Do not tell
Th' inſulting *World*, this Weakneſs.—Nature *knows* it:
Knows, how Diſtreſs miſleads: But Inſult does not.
——What Mother, who beheld her Son, as I did,
Doom'd and endanger'd, *cou'd* have, then, kept Silence!

NARBAS.

Gen'rous your Purpoſe! glorioufly, you err'd:
And fell, but from a Height, 'twas Fame, to reach.
Dry up your Tears, and ſummon All your Soul:
Time preſſes, —— and a Moment, loſt, is Fate.
(Shouts heard.

ISMENE (looking out)

Uproar, and Cries without, in riſing Wildneſs,
Heard from the City, reach the Palace Walls:
Sure Sign of new Confuſion!

NARBAS.

From a Window,
Whence I look'd out, and mark'd the Streets below,
I ſaw the Tyrant meet th' expecting *Prieſts*;
Attending, *not* in *Hymeneal* Robes,
But Veſtments, ſuch as *Sacrifice* demands;
And Pomp of bloody Rites, at dreadful *Altars*.
To *Theſe*, his Hand conſign'd the Victim, led:

And

And deaf'ning Shouts receiv'd him.—From the Train
Of Prieſtly Horrors, *this Way* mov'd their Chiefs;
Follow'd by loud, licentious, Burſts of Joy.
Amid th' enormous Swell of whoſe coarſe Roar,
All, I diſtinctly heard was *Poliphontes*.

MEROPE.

Yes, let 'em *come*——theſe Furies! *rob'd* in LYES!
White, as the Innocence they hate, *without:*
Within, more black than Night! more *fell*, than Death!
I will receive them, with their *Tyrant*'s Rage:
Meet, and o'erwhelm 'em—with a *Mother*'s Anguiſh.
—Where are my *Guards?* Arm'd, for my Vengeance, call 'em. *(Soldiers enter, on one Side:*
(On the other, three Prieſts.

SCENE V.

Meropé, Narbas, Iſmené, Prieſts.

MEROPE.

What! are ye here already?——Out of my Sight,
Ye ſanctify'd *Deceits!* You! whoſe bold Arts
Rule Rulers! and would fright even *Kings*, to *Awe!*
Be gone, fly, vaniſh——Or the *Death*, you bring
For Virtue, overtakes your puniſh'd *Guilt*.
Ye Mouths of Mercy! and ye Hands of Blood!

CHIEF PRIEST.

Sorrows, and Wrongs, claim Privilege to *rail:*
And Heaven's affronted *Vot'ries* muſt *forgive*.

MEROPE.

Cool, in your Cruelty!——Religion's Veil
Ill cloaks Rebellion's Licence. *Death* was your Errand.
Why talk you of *Forgiveneſs?*——'tis not yours.

CHIEF PRIEST.

Not in *Death*'s Cauſe we come; but Heaven's——and *Love*'s.
If *Vows* were plighted, 'twixt the *King* and *You*,
No Power on Earth diſſolves 'em.

MEROPE.

Falſe, as Hell!
He knows, I heard his hated Vows with Horror.
—Slight

Slight Inſolence!——To *this* ill-founded Charge,
Silence, and Scorn, ſhall anſwer. [*turning away.*

CHIEF PRIEST.

Gracious Sovereign!
Suſpend your Anger: 'tis unjuſtly rais'd.
—Enlighten, and *command* us.——Found too *eaſy*
In one *wrong'd* Faith, we twice, perhaps, have *err'd*:
Alike deceiv'd, in *Both*.——Unbend that Brow:
And deign to teach our Doubt, what *Name* to give
This Stranger? this young Captive to the King?

MEROPE.

Give him the Name you dare to miſapply.
Call him your *King*—my Son—my loſt *Eumenes*.

CHIEF PRIEST.

Hear *That*, prophetic Soul! high Heaven!—I tremble,
In Dread, this great Diſcovery comes too late.
The ſhouting People crowd the waiting Altar:
And, erring in their Zeal, *miſ-hail* the Day.
—What *can* be, ſhall be try'd, to croſs his Doom.
They ſhall be taught, in bold, adventrous Whiſpers,
To ſave their Sovereign's Right—but, hence, raſh Queen?
Learn due Repentance: and no more, let looſe
The Wrongs of Rage, againſt the *Tongues* of *Gods*.
[*Exeunt Prieſts.*

MEROPE.

Corrected Paſſion, reverent Hope, touch'd Shame,
And All a Mother's *Fears*, divide my Heart.
—This ſolemn Sharpneſs of deſerv'd Reproach,
Mildly majeſtic, and ſeverely ſoft,
Struck my too conſcious Guilt, with infelt Awe!
I have been warm too ſoon: and juſt, too late.
What, tho' Religion's *Guardians* taint her Tide!
Pure is the *Fountain*, tho' the Stream flows *wide*
Too oft, her *erring Guides* her Cauſe, betray:
Yet, Rage grows *impious*, when it *bars* her *Way*.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Priſon.

EUMENES. NARBAS. EURICLES.

EUMENES.

NOW, recollect your Danger: fly, lov'd Father!
Think on the Tyrant's Power, and ſhun his Rage.

NARBAS.

All Senſe of my own Danger loſt, in yours,
I threw myſelf, regardleſs, at his Feet.
Full of the fatal Subject, I began,
Uncautious in my Tranſport. Starting Conſcience
Fled from the Face of Truth. He ſhun'd to *hear*,
Broke ſhort, reply'd 'twas well: gave me Permiſſion;
Nay, full of ſeeming Zeal, *injoin'd* my coming——
Bad me go pay my *laſt* ſhort Debt, of Counſel:
And try to bend your Heart, to meet his Will.

EURICLES.

He added, that his *Queen*——he call'd her *His!*
I bluſh to name her ſuch: but ſo, he charg'd me.
Since *ſhe*, he ſaid, in Pity but for you,
Yields a reluctant Hand, to cloſe with *his*,
'Tis Time, *her Son*, whoſe Life ſhe holds ſo dear,
Aids his own Int'reſt, and confirms *her* Safety.
—The Reſt, he paus'd and thought: but held it in,
Diſdainful, frown'd a Nod—and bad us *leave* him.

EUMENES.

Slowly awaking, from my Dream of Wonders,
I ſeem re-born, to ſome new World, unknown;
Where every thing, I meet with, ſhocks my Soul.
New Blood inſpires me! a new Nature prompts me!
And a new, *gloomy Daylight* dims my Views.
—You talk of *dying*, whilſt I, yet, half doubt,
Whether, exiſting now, I really *live!*
If I am, truly, the loſt Wretch I *ſeem*,
If here, confeſs'd, I *claim* this Birth ſublime,
If in *Mycené* now inclos'd, I find

Queen

Queen *Meropé*, my Mother—King *Creſphontes*
My Father, murder'd—his fear'd Murd'rer crown'd,
With his ſtol'n Diadem: and, in it, daring
Offer his widow'd Queen a *Hand*, ſtain'd, frightful,
In her firſt *Huſband*'s *Blood*——All This, to *me!*
Seems, while I drink *in* Heaven's fair Light, and view
Yon Manſion of the *Gods*, who govern Man——
Incredible! aſtoniſhing!—and horrid!

EURICLES.

'Tis horrible, indeed! too dark for Thought!
—But, Reaſon's Line wants *Depth* to ſound Heaven's Will.

NARBAS.

Deign, my *devoted* Prince! my King!—my *Son!*
Suffer me, ſtill, to uſe that long-lov'd Name—
Deign but—to *live*.—Time, Chance, and Fortune's Changes,
May vindicate your Glory.—Since the Tyrant
Tempts, to *betray*—reward him, with his *own*.
Deceive Deceivers, and Deceit grows *Virtue*.

EUMENES.

This, in thy Foreſts, *Elis!* had I heard,
Even there, I ſhou'd have bluſh'd to hear, from *Narbas!*
But, as I am.—No more.—I wou'd not wrong
Virtue, ſo *try'd*, by the leaſt Shade of Doubt.
Undue Suſpicion is more abject Baſeneſs,
Even than the Guilt ſuſpected.—Pardon the *ſeeming*.
Kind was your *Motive!*—pitying my *Diſtreſs*,
You, but, forgot my *Duty*.

NARBAS.

Happy Foreſts!
Wou'd, Ye were Ours, once more! there, Peace dwelt with us:
There, Safety ſlept, upon unguarded Hills,
And every Tree's ſoft Shadow *cover'd* Anguiſh.

EUMENES.

Erring, from Shade to Shade, there, loſt to Glory,
Deaf, to my Parent's Wrongs, my Country's Call,
The Great Man's Virtues, or the Good Man's Duties,
I lay, and languiſh'd out a deedleſs Youth:
Eaſy too early; yet, in Reſt, unſatisfied!

Something, like Inſtinct, wak'd Alarm, within me.
Something, I felt at heart—I knew not what—
Withdrew me from this Calm!—I wanted Nothing:
Yet, Nothing, I poſſeſs'd, cou'd fill my Mind!
What was it I purſued, which you not *gave* me?
I weigh'd your Worth, and cou'd not *wiſh* it *more*:
Even to your *Wants*, I *lov'd*—what'ere was yours;
And rev'renc'd your Afflictions. Witneſs, Heaven!
I never wou'd have wiſh'd a *nobler* Father.
—The Heaven I have atteſted, found it fit
To *give* me One, unaſk'd: and made me *wretched.*
I find That Father, loſt to Life, and Empire—
I find a Mother, wrong'd—and cannot right her—
I find a *People* mine—yet, find *myſelf*
The Slave of their Oppreſſor.—Oh! ye Gods!
Is This, to be a *King!*—why *wou'd* you ſave me?
Why, with miſtaken Goodneſs, wou'd your Love
Perſuade me, to *ſuſtain*, a Life, ſo curs'd?
Why did your ill-tim'd Aid *avert* the Stroke,
That wou'd have left this dreadful Scene *un-drawn*,
And plung'd me into one long Sleep, of Peace?

EURICLES.

Oh! 'tis too *near*, that Sleep!—the Tyrant *comes!*

SCENE II.

POLIPHONTES. *To the Fore-going.*

POLIPHONTES.

Retire: and wait, without.

[*Exeunt* Euricles *and* Narbas.

——And Thou, raſh Youth!
Whoſe unexperienc'd Years, and gen'rous Plainneſs,
Fill me with all the Pity, due to Weakneſs!
For the laſt Time I come, to bring thee Power
Thyſelf, to chuſe, and *make*, thy Form of Fortune.
Thy *preſent*, and thy future,—thy claim'd Birth,
Fate, Figure, Being,—all,—depend on *me*,
—What has gay Youth like thine to do with *State?*
Eyeleſs and dark, amid the gloomy Wilds:
Of Court Intrigue, thou *want'ſt* the Torch, of Time,

To

To light thee, through the mazy *Curves*, of Power;
Or, burn *Obſtruction*'s Fabricks down, before thee.
Leave to *my* Toil, to ſmooth thy future Paths;
And root out Faction's Thorns, which trouble Empire.
—When I am *dead*—as Age admits *ſhort* Stay,
Thou, and my *Meropé* will reign, at Eaſe,
And thank my painful Cares: and love my Memory.
—Why art thou dumb?——Pauſe on—I read thee, rightly.
Thou haſt, I know, a kind of ſtuborn Pride,
Call'd *Courage*—and miſtak'ſt it, for a *Virtue*.
—*'Tis* Virtue; when Preſumption drives it not:
But ſuffers *Thought* to guide it.

EUMENES.

Guiding Thought
Has held me patient, long.——Now, anſwer *me*.
Am I *Mycené*'s *Monarch?*

POLIPHONTES.

For thy Birth,
Be it, as Truth, or Trick, or Chance, conclude it,
If, from ſome low, ſome nameleſs Stock, derived,
Be humble, and advis'd—and riſe to Greatneſs.
If happier Offspring caſt thee for a *King*,
Make thyſelf *worthy*, of the Crown I mean thee.
—'Tis but, to wait me to the Marriage Altar,
Where Love, and *Meropé*, and Peace, attend.
There, to the Gods and me, (*Mycené*'s *Guardians*).
Swear Homage, and devote thy faithful Sword.
That done, Sports, Joys, and Safety, crown thy Youth:
And, in thy riper Years, expect the Diadem.
——Determine.——

EUMENES.

'Tis determin'd.

POLIPHONTES.

Tell me *how?*

EUMENES.

Why am I left *unfree* to *chuſe*——yet, preſs'd
To tell thee my Deciſon?——The *compell'd*
To *yield*, diſgrace Conſent: and make Faith doubtful.

Kings ſhou'd diſdain to dread their *powerful* Foes:
Leſs, ſhou'd they deign, to ſwell the Pride of *weak* ones.
—I am a *Captive*. He, who holds not Freedom,
Has not his Will his *own*:——and chuſes *nothing*.

POLIPHONTES.

Fierce, amid Miſery! thou, at once, art brave,
And inſolent, and wretched!—but, beware,
Nor truſt, too far, my Pity of thy Poorneſs.
I give thee, yet, ſome Moments, to reſolve.
I go, before thee: but, my Guards attend,
To bring thee to the Altar. Come, determin'd
To *ſwear*—and hope my Crown, and live, my Son:
Or *die*, a Slave un-own'd, and loſe thy *Name*. [*Is going.*

EUMENES, *calling after him.*

Thou *goeſt* then?

POLIPHONTES. [*Stopping.*]

To *expect* thee.

EUMENES.

I will *come*.
And *with* me, (tremble to be told it,) comes
The *God*, that rais'd *my* Race to root out *Tyrants*.
For *Thee*, proud Troubler of a pilfer'd *Hour!*
Whom *Age* and *Guilt* combine to ſhake from Empire!
Soon ſhall the Throne thou *ſtol'ſt* no more be Thine:
And every ſnaky Fury *hiſs* to *find* thee.
Horror and Penitence ſhall *pale* thoſe *Eyes*,
Which, inſolently ardent, *frown* on *Virtue*.
Menace and Inſult, *then*, ſhall quit thy *Voice*,
And groaning *Anguiſh* grind it.——What the Gods]
Reſtrain *my* Hand from reaching, *happier* Sons
Of my *immortal Sire* ſhall riſe, to execute:
And hurl thee from a *Power*, that *hurts Mankind*.

POLIPHONTES.

Here, *Narbas! Euricles!*——You may return.
I leave him to your Leſſons. Too too deeply,
He feels their paſt Impreſſion. Teach him better:
Or your exacted *Heads* ſhall anſwer to me,
For every well-known Help I owe your Hatred.
—*Narbas!* Thy Age, I think, might beſt be truſted.
Experience lays his Dangers open to thee.

Thou,

Thou, as thou lov'ſt, adviſe him.—Whether born
The Son of *Meropé*, or *Thine*, no matter.
I muſt adopt him mine,—or *Death* demands him.

EUMENES.

Away.———Even to the *Soul*, *Eumenes* dies,
[*Exit* Poliphontes.
Ere *Thine*, but for a Moment.—Friends! did you *hear* him?

SCENE III.

EUMENES, NARBAS, EURICLES.

EUMENES.

Where did this ill-inſtructed Tyrant learn
To *threaten*, for Perſuaſion!—I ſuſpect,
He does not *ſeem* to doubt, but *doubts indeed*,
I ſhare no Blood of *Hercules*.—He's gone:
And call'd me, to his Altar.—Let us *follow*.

NARBAS.

Pauſe.—Whither wou'd ſuch fatal Raſhneſs lead you?

EURICLES.

The Queen has Friends: howe'er too weak, too few:
Who dare *defend* her Cauſe. Give us but *Time*.

EUMENES.

In a ſerener, *ſafer*, Hour, than *This*,
How gladly had my Heart obey'd your Counſel!
Truſted your Wiſdom! heard with docile Ear!
And will'd but by *your* Guidance!—As it *is*,
I dare not hazard a Friend's *Fall*, to ſave me.
No.—In an Hour ſo black, ſo dire, as This,
I taſk but my own Heart, and *Heaven*, to aid me.
If I *muſt* fall, I *will*.———I go—to *try*
What *God* forſakes the Friendleſs.
[*Going out, meets* Meropé.

SCENE IV.

MEROPE.

Stay, my Son.—
Th' Uſurper ſends me to thee.—Reſt, unheard,
His Errand: but my own requires thy Ear.
It has, perhaps, been told thee, that the *Woman*

Conquers the *Queen*: and, that pervertive Dread
Of the Son's Fate forgets the Mother's *Duty*.
—Let no light *Credit* of a Guilt so shameful
Insult the Daughter, Mother, Wife,—ah, me!
And *Widow*—of a King.——Yet, I *must* go:
Must, at the Altar, lend my trembling *Hand*;
And *seem*—oh, Heaven!—

EUMENES.

Seem, Madam?—so, to seem,
Were so to *be*. Can solemn Vows, at Altars,
Leave Room for Art's Evasions? See *me*, sooner,
Tinge-ing the spotted Stone with blushing Blood:
And my torn *Breast* the offer'd Sacrifice.

MEROPE.

So look'd, so spoke—so, sometimes, frown'd, *Cresphontes*,
Full of thy godlike Father, copy too,
The *Confidence*, he lent me. *He* had scorn'd
To doubt me, for a Moment, *less than Meropé*.

EUMENES.

If I was guilty,—think—

MEROPE.

—Be dumb.—Time presses;—
Hear my resolving Will: and curb thy own.
Th' Usurper of thy Throne no sooner joins
My Hand's suppos'd Consent, than, at the *Altar*,
He *swears*—in all the Pomp of *priestly Witness*,
To free thee from thy Chains—and, from That Hour,
Confirm *Succession*, thine.—So, suffers *Thee*,
(By Heav'n's whole imprecated Host, he *swears* it)
To *live*, till he's no more; then, reign, a King.

EUMENES.

Think, at what *Price* comes Empire, bought so *dear!*
Rather than see you wed him—

MEROPE.

Rash, again?—
Bound, by an Oath, so witness'd, by the *Gods*,
And All *Mycene*'s *Priests*—and All her *Peers*—
He dares not *break* it: and Thou liv'st, to *reign*.
—For me, who have, thenceforth, no Call for Life,
I seek thy *Father*, in the Glooms, below.

Trium-

Triumphant, in the Point of laſt Diſtreſs,
Even when the Good ſhall pity, Bad ſhall ſcorn me,
When Honour dreams me *fall'n*, below Redreſs;
Then, ſhall this forfeit Hand, diſdaining Baſeneſs,
Brighter than Glory ſhine, in prais'd Atonement:
And mock the Tyrant's Hope, and ſhun his Inſult.

EUMENES.

Death, in a thouſand Shapes, compar'd with This,
Smiles, with an Infant's Innocence.—No more.
—It ſhall *not be*.—See! my repugnant Soul
Shrinks from th' abhorr'd Conceſſion. The felt *God*,
The God, glows, in me: ſwells, againſt Controul:
And every ſpringy Nerve is active *Fire!*
Come on, Friends! Father! Mother!——truſt my Firmneſs.
Truſt it in Death's dire Scorn. Come, haſten with me——
See, if I bear a Heart, that brooks this Wrong:
That poorly pants, for a baſe Hour of *Life*——
And lets a *Woman's* Blood outdare a *King's*. [*Going.*

MEROPE.

Oh! ſtay: return.——Call: ſtop him.

EURICLES.

Sir!

NARBAS.

Prince!

MEROPE.

Son!

EUMENES. *Returning.*

Look out: hark yonder: from my Father's *Tomb*.
Hear! his *Ghoſt* calls!—Wrong'd Spirit! I *obey*.

MEROPE.

Oh! ſtay, one Moment, *ſtay*.—Methinks the *God*
He talk'd of, ſwells *indeed*, his widening Soul!
Lifts him, *above* Himſelf——above *Mankind*.
I will, reſpectful, *hail* the Power Divine:
And hope, beyond Appearance.—Yet, oh! hear me—
Oh! ſpeak to me, *Eumenes!*——ere thou goeſt,
Breathe on my diſtant Heart ſome Beam—ſome Share—
Of this inſpir'd Divinity, that ſhakes thee.

EUME-

EUMENES.

Come—let me lead you to the Altar's Foot.
There hear, there, ſee—*there*, dwells th' Eternal's Eye!

MEROPE'.

Ah! what is thy Deſign!

EUMENES.

To *die*,—to *live*.
Friends!—in this warm Embrace, *divide* my Soul.
Farewel!—farewel, *forever*.
[*To* Narbas, *who preſſes him tenderly*.
—Weep not, my Father!
No Bluſh, for Deeds unworthy your Inſtructions,
Shall ſtain Remembrance of the Care, I coſt you.
—Stay, *you*——till hither this good Lord, returning,
May guide your Purpoſe: or require your Counſel.
[*Exit* Eumenes.

MEROPE' *to* ISMENE', *who enters*.

Iſmené! ſtay: comfort thy mournful Father.
[*Exeunt* Meropé *and* Euricles.

SCENE V.

NARBAS, ISMENE'.

NARBAS.

Away—I wou'd not ſee *thee* ſhare my Sorrow.

ISMENE'.

Oh! 'twere too *poor* a Wiſh. Heaven knows, I ſeek
No *Share*,—I long for *Power*, to bear it, *All*.

NARBAS.

Thou art too good, for Courts—where *Ruin* preys
On Innocence; and nought but *Guile* is ſafe.
—What are thy Thoughts, of this loſt *Prince*'s Virtues?

ISMENE'.

I am unſkill'd in Man: and, moſt, in Kings.
But, ſure! if ever Beauty dwelt in Form,
Courage in Gentleneſs, or Truth in Grandeur,
All thoſe adorn'd Diſtinctions meet, in *Him*.

NARBAS.

Yet, ſee! how Heaven, that *gave* him all theſe Claims,
Forgets 'em, and reſigns him.—Let That teach thee,

When

When, ſoon, as ſoon they will, thy Splendors *fall*,
Thou loſeſt nothing, but a Right to *Woes*:
Which *mean* Maids never meet with.

ISMENE.

Shou'd the Queen,
Beſt, of her Sex! and Great, above all Rank!
Leave this loud Stage of Pain,—and reſt in *Death*,
Oh! teach my willing Feet to find ſome Gloom,
Dark, as my Proſpects, deep inclos'd, for Safety;
And ſilent, as the Brow of midnight Sleep!

NARBAS.

And cou'dſt thou, ſo, have *Courage*, to be ſafe?——
Yes, we *will* go, my *ſweet Iſmené*, go,
Where Sorrow's ſharpeſt Eye ſhall fail to find us.
Where we may mix with Men, who ne'er deceiv'd,
And Women, born to *be*, the Charms they look.
—There *is* a Place, which my *Eumenes* lov'd,
Till Youth's fond Hope of Glory daſh'd his Peace;
Where Nature, plainly noble, knows no *Pomp*;
And Virtue moves no *Envy*:——quiet *Plenty*,
Unartful *Pleaſure*, unaffected *Joy*,
And ever bluſhing, ever guiltleſs *Modeſty*,
Cloathe Love, and Taſte, and Converſe, neatly fine;
Unloaded with their *Tinſels*.——Hark! That *Cry*
Bodes Horror——'tis the Signal of ſome Fate,
—Liſten, again——

ISMENE.

Again I hear: and tremble.
Who knows, but, now, the Queen's too direful Deed
Has ended all her Mis'ries!——Cruel *Hymen!*
Such if thy Unions, let the World *disjoin!*
And Marriage be the hated Mark of Shame!

NARBAS.

No more theſe Eyes ſhall find thee, fated King!
Creſphontes, and his Race, are, All, no more.

ISMENE.

Hark! It comes on, like Thunder in the Wind,
Still ſtrength'ning in its Motion.

NARBAS.

I diſtinguiſh
The Voice of battling Parties—echoing Trumpets—

And Groans of dying Men, confus'dly mingled.

ISMENE', *at a Window.*

Hence, from the Temple, to the Palace Gate,
The ſcattring Crowd runs, wide, a thouſand Ways:
All buſied, without View—All, driven, by Terror!

SCENE VI.

NARBAS. ISMENE'. EURICLES, *bloody.*

NARBAS.

Breathleſs and bleeding ſee! who comes!—O, *Euricles!*
Is it of Enemies?——or, flows it, fatal?

ISMENE'.

Now wou'd the Deaf be bleſs'd—the Blind be happy.

EURICLES.

Scarce had I Strength, wedg'd in by croſſing Crowds,
To ſtem yon breathing Torrent.—Give me Reſt.

NARBAS.

Eumenes?——does he *live?*

EURICLES.

He——

ISMENE'.

Dreadful Pauſe!

EURICLES.

He is——the *Son confeſs'd*——of *Grecian Gods!*

NARBAS.

What has he ſuffer'd?

EURICLES.

Nothing—but, has *done*——
Beyond Example's Boaſt.——Oh! ſuch a Deed!
So terrible! ſo juſt!——ſo fill'd with Wonders!
That half *Alcides'* Labours, ſcarce were more.

NARBAS.

And ſhall he be a King?

EURICLES.

He *is.*

NARBAS.

And *Meropé?*
Great Mirror of Affliction!—lives *She*, too?
How was it?—ſay.—My Joys will grow too ſtrong?

EURI-

EURICLES.

The Altar, ſtrew'd with Flow'rs, was ready dreſs'd,
The ſmoking Incenſe roſe, in fragrant Curls,
And *Hymen*'s lambent Torches flam'd, ſerene,
Silence, and Expectation's dreadful *Stillneſs*,
Doubled the ſolemn Horror of the Scene!
—There, *Poliphontes* ſtood: and, at his Side,
Dumb as a deſtin'd Victim, ſtood the *Queen*.
Our Prince's ſummon'd Hand had touch'd the Altar;
His Eye ſought Heaven—as if prepar'd to *ſwear*.
The Tyrant ſmil'd:—when ſtrait, the Prieſt look'd *pale*;
The Lights extinguiſh'd—and the Temple's Roof,
Shook by deſcending Thunder, ſeem'd to *bow!*
The *God!* the *God!* the reverend Starter cry'd,
Forbids theſe baneful Nuptials.—Yes: I HEAR him,
The dreadful *Prince* reply'd: and, at that Word,
Leapt, from the Altar, to the Tyrant's Breaſt—
And plung'd the ſacred *Axe* of Sacrifice,
Snatch'd, like a Lightning's Flaſh! and reach'd his *Life*.
—He *fell*—and o'er him while with pendant Eye
Th' indignant Hero hung, with Arm new-rais'd,
Baſe, from behind, pale *Erox* pierc'd his Side.
—Red, in his mingled Blood, and riſing Anger,
He heard the *Crowd's protective Cry*—turn'd ſhort,
And buried in his Brow the rapid Steel.
Then, to the Altar's Height ſublimely ſprung,
Stood, Monarch, all-confeſs'd; and *wav'd* the Throng.

NARBAS.

All, All, prodigious! and the Work of Heaven.

ISMENE.

How was the trembling Queen, mean while, employ'd?

EURICLES.

Silence, ye People, hear your King, ſhe cry'd
Son of my Sorrows: hear *Mycené*'s *Gods*.
—More, ſhe had ſaid—but from the Temple's Porch,
The Tyrant's Guards ruſh'd in; and All grew Tempeſt.
—Th' inſpiring Prieſts proclaim'd their Sovereign's Cauſe;
The People heard 'em: and a *War* of *Wills*,
And Swords croſs-claſhing, fill'd the *Fane* with Death.
Sudden, the Shrines, o'erthrown, were ſtain'd with Blood;

Cruſh'd Infants, in their ſmother'd Mother's Arms,
Gaſp'd, and expir'd. Friends, Foes, Prieſts, Strangers, All,
Heap'd on each other lay, one mingled Carnage!
Now flying, now returning, flows and ebbs,
From Side to Side, the preſs'd and ſhouldring Stream.
—The Swell of Slaughter puſh'd me thro' the Gate,
And veil'd the *Queen*, and her *Eumenes*, from me.
But, to the laſt, long as my Sight cou'd hold her,
I ſaw her, in the bloody Tide, oppoſing,
Beſeeching, threat'ning; tiring every Limb,
And loſing every Prayer, to *ſave Eumenes*.
—But, ſee! Heaven's Inſtrument, the kind High Prieſt,
Is here—and calls for *Narbas*.

[*Enter High Prieſt.*

HIGH PRIEST.

Good old Man!
To you, and to your Daughter's pitied Fears,
Our Queen, victorious, her doom'd Son, redeem'd
And Heaven, that loves the Juſt, ſend Peace and Joy.
—The People, by *my* timely Zeal appriz'd,
Won from the Tyrant's Cauſe, ſuſtain the King.
The King, by more than mortal Force, inſpir'd,
Has, by one, great, determin'd, dreadful Blow,
To his high, injur'd, Race, his Country's Fame,
And murder'd Father's Ghoſt, a bloody Victim,
Devoted! offer'd up the Tyrant's Soul.
—Death, and Revenge, and due Defence of Right,
Delug'd the Temple: and the Scene grew horrid.
When, to the Leaders of his furious Guards,
Who, through the direful Conflict, won their way,
Pale *Poliphontes*, ſtruggling from his Pangs,
And ſtagg'ring painful, with expiring Eye,
Rais'd his now powerleſs Hand; bad Slaughter ceaſe:
Call'd the Gods *juſt*—and own'd th' inflicted *Vengeance*.
Then, at their Prince's Feet, th' aſtoniſh'd Band
Fell proſtrate. Silence ſtrait took place of Uproar:
Low knelt the Crowd, in Peace—Rebellion died—
And Awe, and Homage, felt th' inſpiring *God*.
But look, where Heaven's compleated Work appears.

SCENE

SCENE the Laſt.

To the Foregoing—MEROPE', *led by* EUMENES, *bloody.—Prieſts. Guards. People. Shouts without: and Trumpets.*

NARBAS, EURICLES, CHIEF PRIEST, *and* ISMENE'.
—All, ſpeak, kneeling.

Hail! and be ever bleſs'd—O, King! O, Queen!

MEROPE.

Riſe—and lament no more, ye happy Friends
Of Virtue, and of Heaven!—See! what the Gods
Have done—to ſhame Suſpicion, into *Faith!*
Oh! never let the Innocent *deſpair:*
The Hand, that *made*, can *ſave:* and beſt knows *when.*
—But you, Heav'n's *Herald!* Envoy, of its Will!
And Image, of its Mercy! what, to *you*,
Shall my recov'ring Senſe of Godhead ſay?
That dar'd, in Sorrow's Agony, *forget*
The Diſtance, of High Heaven, from human Weakneſs!
Oh! call not Anguiſh *Inſult.* Smile, on *Wrongs:*
And bleſs the pitied Pang, amidſt its Raſhneſs.
[*To* Eumenes.
—Son of *Alcides!*—for, what Heart, but *His*,
Nouriſh'd in Miſery! by Wants obſtructed!
Ere ſprung, like thine, at Youth's firſt *Shoot*, to Glory?
Ere, for its firſt Eſſay, o'erwhelm'd Oppreſſion;
Trod on a Tyrant, and redeem'd a *People?*

EUMENES.

'Tis but the low, the laſt, the lighteſt Duty
Of a *King*'s Hand, to *dare.* 'Tis His, to ſave;
To think, to hear, to labour, to diſcern,
To form, to remedy,—to *be*—but *one:*
Yet, act, and love, and fear, and feel,—for *All.*
—Oh, Madam! I am yours, midſt *all* theſe Claims.
Be Thoſe my Glory's, *This* my Duty's Care,
To add my Royal *Father*'s Love, to mine:
And, with a *doubled* Rev'rence, ſeek your Comfort.
—Help me, good *Euricles!* in That ſweet View:
Thou art no Stranger to its gen'rous Call—

And

And I will *court* Thy Counſels—and *reward* 'em.
—*Narbas!* what Power can Language lend my Love,
To paint the Joy, *Thy* Senſe of Pleaſure gives me?
Guide of my Infancy! my Life's long *Saver!*
Light of my opening Mind! my Heart's firſt *Former!*
Thou Source, and Soul, and Author, of my Virtues:
And every future Fame, the Gods may lend me!
—What can deficient Gratitude inſpire,
To ſhew my *Will to thank* Deſert, like Thine?
[*Turns toward* Iſmené.
Unleſs This ſofter Copy of thy Goodneſs,
Lovelieſt *Iſmené*, ſmiles on my ſweet Hope:
And ſtoops to be a *Queen*—to bleſs her *Father.*
—I mark a meaning Bluſh, that looks Conſent:
And *hear* thee, tho' thou ſpeak'ſt not.—Till anon,
Suſpend we Thoughts, thus tender.—Let us, now,
Summon *Mycené*'s *Chiefs*, and calm her People.
[*To* Meropé.
Come, Madam! He who *reigns*, but climbs to Care;
Safe, tho' his Throne, he finds no *Softneſs*, there.
Dangers, and Doubts, and Toils, each Moment, ſeize:
Hang on his Buſineſs——or perplex his Eaſe.
Bright, but by Pomp of *Woe*, Kings *ſhine* in vain:
Envy'd, for *Anguiſh*; and adorn'd, for Pain!

The END.

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H.E.H. DUPL.